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*Pen drawing by Kerr Eby after
the painting by Sargent in the
National Portrait Gallery*

HENRY JAMES

ÆT. 70

Henry James

REPRESENTATIVE SELECTIONS, WITH
INTRODUCTION, BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND NOTES

BY

LYON N. RICHARDSON

Western Reserve University



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PREFACE

The introductory critical study was written in an endeavor to present, within restricted limits, a careful account of the development of the mind of Henry James, with especial reference to events influencing his literary work, and to offer descriptive or critical comment on nearly all of his essays and fiction.

The Bibliography of books and articles relating to James is as complete as the editor could make it, and he wishes to thank Professor Harry Hayden Clark for his assistance in this endeavor, as well as for numerous suggestions embodied in the critical study. The works of Henry James are listed in the "Chronological Table and Selected Bibliography of the Works," as being perhaps the best way of giving a brief sequential survey of the author at work. The Notes to both essays and stories were prepared to serve as introductory remarks explaining some of the pertinent biographical and critical foreground.

In selecting essays and reviews from the critical writings of James, the editor has sought to present some of James's most important critical observations regarding the works of six major figures in literature—three American, one Russian, one English, and one French. Four of these six influenced James's fiction: Ivan Turgenev, Nathaniel Hawthorne, George Eliot, and Émile Zola. Of the other two, it may be said that Walt Whitman represented a literary world entirely apart from James's, while Ralph Waldo Emerson supplied James with the "essence of good instruction" beyond the field of fiction. In addition to these essays on authors, one general essay, "The Art of Fiction," has been included. With the exception of the selection from *Hawthorne*, all the essays are complete, and of *Hawthorne* the whole of the fifth chapter, treating of the three major

novels, has been reprinted. It may be noted, too, that the essays illustrate James's critical thought through a long span of years—from 1865 to 1903—and that they are arranged chronologically so that the development of James's ideas and expressions may be easily followed.

All of the selections from the fiction of James are complete. The editor has aimed to choose some of the best short stories which James wrote during a long period of years—from 1873 to the beginning of the twentieth century; and he has further endeavored to present stories which are examples of various techniques, materials, and habits of thought so characteristic of James that they may be found elsewhere in his works. "The Madonna of the Future" is an illustration of James's ability, manifested early, to portray Italian character. "Madame de Mauves" is representative of James's "international" fiction, in which French and American characters clash. "The Lesson of the Master," "The Middle Years," and "The Next Time" are as nearly "immortal" as James could make his shorter works, and they richly and deeply illustrate his abiding thoughts on the nature of creative forces and impelling motives in those who write literature. "The Real Thing," like "The Madonna of the Future," shows James using art and artists for his material—a field of interest which, next to literature, James most enjoyed. "Maud-Evelyn" is representative of a whole group of works by James treating of frustration, supernaturalism, and a strong sense of the past.

The editor wishes to express his appreciation of the services of Mr. C. John Messer while preparing the manuscript, and to thank Charles Scribner's Sons for permission to quote passages from Percy Lubbock's edition of *The Letters of Henry James* in the introductory essay.

L. N. R.

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HENRY JAMES

I. TOWARD A PORTRAIT

It is the fate of a man of many subtle qualities more often to be caricatured than portrayed. The elements of his complex personality are more easily exhibited separately than in the combination which becomes the essential personality of the man. Such a fate attends Henry James. Critics, endeavoring to draw his portrait, often come nearer achieving a caricature of themselves within a caricature of James. It seems that the best any speculative reader may do is to work toward a portrait, sensing the basic integrity in the author, "the figure in the carpet," and knowing that James is many things to many men simply because many men have found in him many things.

The qualities of Henry James have brought forth a large body of criticism, and one may reasonably say that no generation will let him alone. His family environment was one of culture amidst a wealth which, under proper restraints, was adequate to free the members from the necessity of earning a livelihood. Beyond his home, his environment was international. His education was unique in the absence of dogmatism and in the presence of a constant insistence on the discipline of responsible personal thinking. These conditioning factors are basic in any portrait of the man, and they molded his social, political, religious, ethical, literary, and aesthetic habits of thought into patterns which will continue to activate the pens of many men in the field of criticism.

At least in part, the stimulus to controversy about James has arisen from the fact that many critics who recognize his greatness will not make their peace with James on his own fair terms. They will not accept him in his unique role. An untiring perfectionist endowed with great capacities and a peculiar educa-

tion, he offers his readers literary productions beautiful in their own right. But because he must totally disregard many subjects of interest to men generally, and because he has insisted on infinite elaboration of his own themes, some readers there will always be who will petulantly quarrel with him, wishing he had written other things or in other ways; yet in some manner even they are often caught in the gossamer web of his powers.

This essay will attempt a little later to present another critical portrait of James. But let us first consider some of the lines others have drawn to emphasize their conceptions of the man.

James's critics have been specific. He has been called a literary snob, "the most delightful literary snob of the period,"¹ who was "superlatively patronizing in his attitude" toward literary methods not consonant with his own² and so blind as to consider Hawthorne provincial while failing to see the incorrigible provinciality of the English.³ That James had the highest regard for his own literary work at its best is unquestionably true; his prefaces to the selective New York Edition of his works (1907-17) are convincing evidence. That he failed to see certain qualities in the works of others and certain limitations in his own is not to be denied. But a cursory survey of James's many critical studies and prefaces will establish him as fundamentally a perfectionist who set high standards for himself and required them of others. He was tenacious, even stubborn; but he was more nearly a striving idealist than a snob.

In similar vein, James has been accused of writing in an osten-

¹ Julia Collier Harris, ed., *Joel Chandler Harris: Editor and Essayist* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1931), p. 187.

² John Curtis Underwood, *Literature and Insurgency: Ten Studies in Racial Evolution* (New York, 1914), pp. 42-3; Underwood recalls W. C. Brownell's comment on the narrowness of James's critical appreciation.

³ William Dean Howells took James to task for this prejudice. See Percy Lubbock, ed., *The Letters of Henry James*. 2 vols. (New York, 1920), I, 72. (This work is hereafter referred to as *Letters*.) See also Harris, *loc. cit.*

tentious style, expressing ordinary, simple ideas in tortuous sentences more involved than the burden of their contents warrants.⁴ Against this charge others have sprung to James's defense. William Dean Howells, for instance, has noted the "luminous and uncommon use of words, the originality of phrase, the whole clear and beautiful style" of his early work;⁵ and Carl Van Doren has observed that "even in the elaborate, maturer books the style is obscure only in the sense that it speaks of matters less blunt and tangible than those which most fiction deals with."⁶ The problem of style will be discussed later, but to deny that James had an effective style is to allow personal taste to throw out an original, an honest, and a fine prose. Indeed, James made "this white fervor for style, this unmitigated horror of any slackness or softness . . . a religion."⁷

Further, James has been assayed as deficient in the qualities of a novelist, "tremendously lacking in emotional power," "conventional, timid, and undecided,"⁸ rather a critic than a writer of fiction,⁹ whose novels Arnold Bennett "simply could not read" because they "did not seem to me to be *about* anything."¹⁰ He has been likened unto a first-nighter viewing the world through opera glasses; and the experience of reading "one of his novels has been compared to climbing a mountain of sand."¹¹ More restrained writers have also risen to criticize his works. Even temperate W. C. Brownell noticed a "lack of large vi-

⁴For illustration, see Ernest Augustus Boyd, *Literary Blasphemies* (New York and London, 1927), Chap. ix, "Henry James," pp. 213-26.

⁵*The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, November, 1882, p. 25.

⁶*The American Novel* (New York, 1921), p. 217.

⁷*Henry James: Letters to A. C. Benson and Auguste Monod* (London, 1930), Introduction, by E. F. Benson, pp. vi-vii.

⁸Francis Hackett (agreeing with Arnold Bennett), in *Horizons: A Book of Criticism* (New York, 1918), p. 74.

⁹John Macy, *The Spirit of American Literature* (New York, 1913), p. 331; Henry Seidel Canby, *Definitions: Essays in Contemporary Criticism* (New York, 1922), pp. 278-81.

¹⁰Arnold Bennett, *Things That Have Interested Me* (New York, 1921), p. 324.

¹¹Underwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 70.

tality" in James's works as contrasted with those of a novelist such as Balzac, who strove to depict all classes of men.¹² The restricted nature of James's interests has always perturbed many readers. He subordinated matters political and broadly social to the quest for art and beauty. So Vernon Louis Parrington, ever watchful for democracy and the social mind, drew a one-sided analysis when he dismissed James in two pages as representing merely the American "nostalgia of culture" of the latter nineteenth century. To Parrington, James was a "self-deceived romantic . . . who fell in love with culture and never realized how poor a thing he worshipped," who naïvely believed that Mayfair was a "subtle place," and failed to see that his grand conception of European civilization was a "figment of his romantic fancy."¹³

Such analyses do not embrace the positive qualities of Henry James; they are rather evidences of vexations arising in the minds of certain readers when they do not discover in James matters either foreign to him or held in severe restraint for reasons adequate to his way of thinking. Through the great body of his work runs an active, strong moral sense that is not "undecided"; the tragedy in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902)¹⁴ is but one example of this general truth. Within his work lies strong emotional power held in shortest leash; witness, for instance, in *The Ambassadors* (1903) the insistent plea for man to *live*, to seek experience, not to circumscribe himself within a short radius. The plea is all the more compelling by reason of James's recognition that there were many things for which he could not sum-

¹²*American Prose Masters* (New York, 1909), pp. 364-76.

¹³*Main Currents in American Thought*. 3 vols. (New York, 1927-30), III, 239-41.

¹⁴In general, dates of publication are given only on the occasion of the first mention of a title. Dates refer to book publication. Serialization of novels is noted in the "Chronology of the Life and Selected Bibliography"; when short stories originally appeared in magazines, the fact is noted in an accompanying footnote.

mon sympathy, though his insatiable curiosity led him to extract the very essence of a number of situations in life and made him the supreme novelist on certain subjects.¹⁵ It is true that the western boundary of his America was the Hudson, and that he could not appreciate the motivations of farmers, businessmen, or professional men; not for James was Howells's theme in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. Neither the lower nor the unfortunate classes could command his highest interest, though he groped somewhat toward them in several stories, notably in *The Princess Casamassima* (1886). He lived in an age which produced nearly a hundred "utopian" romances, but such dreams did not kindle his imagination, and he left them to the labors of Edward Bellamy, Howells, and dozens of other writers.¹⁶ Rather, with the selectivity of genius conscious of its nature, he cultivated a field properly within his capacities; thus he preserved in literature certain important studies in patterns of life as they were lived in the area whose four points are New York, Boston, London, and Rome, and he became the supreme author of the cosmopolitan or "international" novel.

He was basically psychological in his approach. His aim was ever to dramatize, with all the objectivity and "immediacy" of painting a portrait in public view, important processes of characters in unstable situations. He gave to literature at least three of its finest heroines—Milly Theale, Isabel Archer, and Maggie Verver—and a score or more of its interesting feminine personalities. He analyzed carefully the gradual degeneration of certain characters; conversely, he traced forces and elements

¹⁵For a good essay on this theme, see John Cowper Powys, *Suspended Judgments: Essays on Books and Sensations* (New York, 1916), pp. 367-98.

¹⁶So far as I know, the most extended treatment of American "utopian" romances is by Robert L. Shurter, *The Utopian Novel in America: 1865-1900*, a doctoral dissertation in manuscript in the library of Western Reserve University. See also Allyn B. Forbes, "The Literary Quest for Utopia, 1880-1900," *Social Forces*, VII, 179-89 (1927).

which developed and integrated human beings to conditions of sound and finished personality. He often recurred to themes treating of "the sense of the past" and its control over subsequent moods; this subject was as abiding in James, with as fortunate results for literature, as were the meditations of Nathaniel Hawthorne on sin.

One must remember, too, that James greatly extended the literature of dire frustration and of horror. The defeat of young men weakly endowed with natural abilities, and especially the frustration of plain, unwanted young women, are scattered through his works; indeed, Rose Armiger, in *The Other House* (1896), fearful of never winning the man she loves, murders a young girl in coldest blood. Not a few of the characters engage in liaisons or exhibit abnormalities of mind. Ghosts, dual personalities, obsessions, perversions, and defenseless children surrounded by vicious psychopathic environments are found in a goodly number of his stories.

In all his works, James was concerned in keeping himself on a high plane of responsible thinking and artistic craftsmanship. Careful in his writing to accept only the "germ" of an observed occurrence in life, he followed the arduous road of the best romanticists, inventing major substances as well as details, and elaborating the ideas and deepening the implications until many a tale conceived as a short story became a *nouvelle*. This way was the way of James's achievement in expanding the records of thought and feeling.

To accomplish these purposes, James applied himself diligently to craftsmanship. The prefaces to the New York Edition are filled with intricate discussions relative to methods of execution. Foreshortening, the choice of narrator, and the selection of a dominating center of revelation are but three of many problems of composition which James pondered everlastingly. His fiction, though in general little given to action, is filled with characters in the process of expanding their comprehension of

qualities in a situation. His constant effort was to offer the reader continuous revelation; life's experiences, in a James novel, are constantly being phrased by characters acquiring new realizations. This striving for "dramatization"—for giving the reader and the character the same experience at one and the same time—may be seen in many of his works: *The Awkward Age* (1899), *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Ambassadors*, and *The Golden Bowl* (1904) are examples. Though he failed in his attempts to write popular dramas for the theater, he brought from the drama to the novel a new sense of the dramatic, and thus he expanded the technique of prose fiction.

The characteristics of James have been interpreted as springing from his condition of being essentially a man without a country. Much of his life was spent in England and on the Continent. Van Wyck Brooks has portrayed him as a writer whose roots never drew sustenance from America or Europe; on this basis he has presented James as always an *émigré*, never fundamentally at home, and consequently "habitually embarrassed" and self-communicative.¹⁷ Others have supported this thesis. Brooks has pointed out that Middleton Murry has characterized James as a man yearning for European culture yet never able to become a part of it. Régis Michaud has remarked that the "pathos" of James lies in his having been suspended between two worlds, unattached to either; to this factor Michaud has attributed the evidence of many inhibitions in James's works, the result of shyness and timidity.¹⁸ Even in an earlier day, the lack of a native cultural environment in James's works was noted: Thomas Wentworth Higginson suggested that James's selection of materials was too choice and that the author lived too much in Europe.¹⁹

¹⁷ *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* (New York, 1920); for quotations, see pp. 93, 131.

¹⁸ *The American Novel Today* (Boston, 1928), pp. 47-54.

¹⁹ *Literary World*, November 22, 1879, pp. 383-84.

There is of course some truth in several of these estimates. In 1876, when James was thirty-three years of age, he was in residence in Paris, then the world capital of the novel, and he evidently planned to remain there indefinitely.²⁰ But when in the summer of the same year Ivan Turgenev left Paris for Russia to absorb more of his native life and to replenish his literary materials, James felt lonely. He seems suddenly to have distrusted the virtue of his environment, and he soon went to England, determined to find a sustaining society. Yet though England remained his home, he did not become wholly English. Years later he said to Hamlin Garland that if he had his life to live over again he would know America well, and no other land; for to him a partial knowledge of two continents had been a "mixture" that had "proved disastrous."²¹

But to assume that the problems of James's personality may be completely resolved by the factor of intercontinental residence is to simplify the solution beyond conviction. James's statement to Garland was partly an idle wish for something not at hand. It was not the expression of a true frustration. Nor should his "suspension" between two worlds be lamented. James's way of life was the way of his own education and choice, consonant with the promptings of his nature and training. He in no way denied himself at the expense of his own chosen art; like Paul Overt's in "The Lesson of the Master" (1892),²² James's decisions were channeled only by his desire to do the best he could to forward his literary progress. There is no reason, then, to believe that "pathos" lay in his having been born in New York with his eyes from infancy directed toward Eu-

²⁰In a letter to Howells, May 28, 1876, James wrote that he cared little for the "literary fraternity," but that he was becoming a "very contented Parisian" and felt he had struck "roots into Parisian soil" (Percy Lubbock, ed., *Letters*, I, 48-49).

²¹Hamlin Garland, *Roadside Meetings* (New York, 1930), p. 461.

²²Original publication, *The Universal Review*, July 16-August 15 1888.

rope, or that his residence in leading cities of the world was from a literary standpoint "disastrous." There is no more pathos in his literary career than in the careers of Mark Twain, Nathaniel Hawthorne, or William Dean Howells. Each produced works true to his individual pattern, and it is worse than idle to wish they had done other things. One need not be sorry that Mark Twain blushed at the thought he might have too much Mississippi mud on his shoes for Eastern drawing rooms, or that Hawthorne was tormented by contemplations on sin and bedeviled by the spirits of witches condemned before his birth, or that James could not shake hands heartily with Chicago businessmen. For the good estate of literature, one need be alarmed only when the natures and training of authors are effectively thwarted and made to run inconsistent courses. Such was not the case with James's flow of life. There has been too great a tendency to charge certain inner limitations of capacity and personality to his environment.

James was "international" in the sense that from the time of his childhood he was never provincial. His mental disenfranchisement, such as it was, was accomplished while Europe was still for him a land for long excursions and America his home. Had James returned to New York when he established permanent residence in London in 1876, he never would have become natively American in the manner of Howells; James went to London as naturally as Howells to New York and Boston when the latter returned from Venice. At nineteen years of age James began attendance at the Harvard Law School; there he became "furiously American,"²³ as he later recalled with some astonishment, thus indicating how thoroughly he had been a citizen of a social class rather than of a nation. During the year 1862 he listened to lectures by James Russell Lowell, and became his lifelong admirer and friend, as his essay on Lowell indicates. But he did not remain long at Harvard; instead,

²³ *Notes of a Son and Brother* (New York and London, 1914), p. 367.

he remained true to himself: he forsook the atmosphere of the law and "Americanization," and he turned to writing critical studies of the works of French and English novelists. Nor did he later veer from inward promptings.

II. THE MATRIX

The unusual characteristics of James's mind were established chiefly by the peculiarities of his early environment and his education. Throughout his life he was free from the necessity of earning much of his livelihood. His Ireland-born paternal grandfather, marvelously adaptive, came to America at the age of eighteen, soon turned himself to processing tobacco and salt and to acquiring real estate, thus extending his interests to Albany, Utica, Syracuse, and New York, and died leaving an estate of approximately three million dollars for distribution among twelve heirs. One of these, his son Henry, father of the author, was graduated from Union College, in Schenectady, in 1830, fell heir to his portion two years later, and led the quiet, detached life of a theologian and scholar. He was married in 1840, and established his home at 2 Washington Place, New York. Five children were born: William, the eldest, in 1842; Henry, fifteen months later (April 15, 1843); Wilkinson, in 1845; Robertson, in 1846; and Alice, in 1848.²⁴ The father denied his family no good thing, and spent his money intelligently. The sum which ultimately went to Henry his son, augmented by the modest income of the son's literary work, sustained

²⁴For accounts of the early life of James, see especially the two autobiographical volumes, *A Small Boy and Others* (New York and London, 1913) and *Notes of a Son and Brother* (New York and London, 1914). See also Austin Warren, *The Elder Henry James* (New York, 1934); Clinton Hartley Grattan, *The Three Jameses: A Family of Minds* (New York, 1932); Van Wyck Brooks, *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* (New York, 1925); Pelham Edgar, *Henry James: Man and Author* (London, 1927); and Lubbock, ed., *The Letters of Henry James*.

the author in comfortable circumstances throughout his entire life. He was free to practice his art.

The children were reared in a world which, except speculatively, touched neither business nor the professions. In fact, the father was hard put to it to explain his service in the world when his young sons, under pressure by their playmates to describe their father's occupation, carried the matter to him: "... just say I'm a Student" was the final reply.²⁵ And the author's own life was as free as was his father's from the contacts with ordinary men at work. From the period of his youth until his death his motivations were "just *literary*."²⁶

Thus the world which James elaborated in literature is free from the world of agriculture, commerce, trade, manufacturing, and the professions, by which most men live. It is a world of books and authors, of conversation, of theaters and actors, of art (though curiously devoid of music), of the leisured classes and their servants. In James's fiction the problem of earning a living seldom arises. Authors and artists are shown toiling; but in general, labor or work, as a theme, is incidental. This does not imply, however, that the poor and the exceptionally restricted of income are not scattered through his books. The limited resources of Kate Croy and Merton Densher are the reason for their conspiracy in *The Wings of the Dove*. *The Princess Casamassima* is built of blocks of poverty and wealth. The poor circumstances of Ralph Limbert in "The Next Time" (1896)²⁷ and of Paul Overt in "The Lesson of the Master" throw their literary struggles into strong relief. The serving class is important in both *What Maisie Knew* (1897) and "The Turn of the Screw" (1898). The little postal telegraph employee of "In the Cage" (1898)²⁸ could only daydream her way temporarily into luxurious Mayfair through her interpretations

²⁵ *Notes of a Son and Brother*, p. 69.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

²⁷ Original appearance was in the *Yellow Book*, July, 1895.

²⁸ For an American review, see the *Nation*, December 8, 1898, p. 432.

of the liaison between Captain Everard and Lady Bradeen. The delicately traced descending fortunes of the valet Brooksmith, who gives the title to one of James's better tales (1892),²⁹ are treated with unusual sensitiveness to poverty; and the utter dependence of Morris Gedge on his small salary renders his final action in "The Birthplace" (1903) all the more dramatic. The list is by no means complete, but one must still recall the long life of parsimony led by Herbert Dodd in that excellent tale, "The Bench of Desolation" (1910),³⁰ emotionally reminiscent of "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903), so pervading is the sense of futility or of wasted possibilities.

The religious discipline of young James's household was one of acquiring and weighing thoughts, and of reaching tentative conclusions to be abandoned if or when time and experience should offer other more appealing conceptions. It was a discipline of independent thought. The elder Henry James had been reared in the Presbyterian doctrine, but by nature he was individualistic. When he visited England in 1843, he gravitated to the Sterling Club, where he found men of philosophical inclination turning their minds speculatively to political economy and religion. He also formed an abiding friendship with Dr. Garth Wilkinson, and through him became a thorough student of the doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg, though he was never wholeheartedly committed to the church. He was a man ever thinking, never "joining." Henry the son has recorded that he never knew a more religious man than was his father, yet the boy found himself without a pew. He might go anywhere to church, but he was attached to no sect.

Such detachment led the junior Henry James to disregard the church as an institution. In his lifetime thousands of religious novels appeared, indicative of the protesting ferment that kept

²⁹Original appearance was in *Harper's Weekly*, May 2, 1891.

³⁰Original appearance was in *Putnam's Magazine*, October, 1909-January, 1910.

alive a hundred and fifty denominations in the United States in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Millions of copies of the Reverend Charles M. Sheldon's *In His Steps* (1896) were sold both here and in England, but James was not of his stripe; nor was he motivated by the moods of Harold Frederic (*The Damnation of Theron Ware*, 1896) in America or of Mrs. Humphry Ward (*Robert Elsmere*, 1888) in England. Ministers, priests, vicars, bishops are nearly absent from the roll call of his characters; souls in religious turmoil are not to be found there, and only an occasional character, mentally tired, enters a church to retire from the world for a few moments.

Yet the moral spirit is implicit in his writings, even though his home education discouraged reliance on any one authoritarian doctrine. Dogma is supplanted by personal moral considerations, and especially by an instinctive rightness of heart. In his early critical writings he registered disgust at what seemed to him gross immoralities in the works of most of the current French novelists—an absence that allowed contaminations to seep in.³¹ He took occasion to express his great delight in the moral strength of George Eliot's novels, and he praised English literary morality. In his own fiction, right does not always triumph, and there is tragedy in the state of helpless innocence harmed by the presence of sin; but ethics is an active factor in his works. In *Roderick Hudson* (1876) Mary Garland's simple faith and wholesome honesty open new visions to Christina Light, and Roderick's lack of moral stamina leads to his destruction. Christopher Newman's rugged character in *The American* (1877) rises above the polished, covetous social life of Madame de Cintré's family. Bessie Alden's stanch integrity, frankness, sound culture, and sensitive goodness rebuke the class-con-

³¹Turgenev, with his sweet goodness of heart, was "worth the whole heap" of French writers of his time, James wrote to Howells on May 28, 1876; see *Letters*, I, 49. Cf. his essay on Maupassant in *Partial Portraits* (London and New York, 1888).

scious duchess in *An International Episode* (1878). In *Washington Square* (1880) Morris Townsend's selfishness is defeated. The egocentric, sadistic, expatriate American, Gilbert Osmond, is but a dark, malicious figure before whom shine forth the values of Isabel Archer, who, in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), remains faithful to her marriage vows even though she is the victim of a cruel deception. Militant "isms" of Boston, notably feminism, are ridiculed in *The Bostonians* (1886) in favor of a healthy, normal course in life for the heroine. The cancer of hate is effectively removed in "The Altar of the Dead" (1895); falseness and dishonesty lead to the renunciation of materialism in *The Wings of the Dove*. It is clear that James thought in terms of sound personal values. Deceit exists in the world, as in *The Golden Bowl*; indeed, in James's best novels his truest and finest characters are surrounded by treachery. But the Isabel Archers, the Milly Theales, and the Maggie Ververs lead us to retain our faith in humanity.

It is also clear that James assumed evil often springs from psychical disturbances; in some cases it is strongly psychopathic in origin. Disintegration of character takes place in *Roderick Hudson*; Osmond's villainy is sadistic in *The Portrait of a Lady*; the thwarting of a primal urge over a period of time leads to the deception in *The Wings of the Dove*. In "The Liar" (1889)³² Mr. Capadose's inconsequential fictions arise from an aberration of mind, and by association his wife becomes similarly afflicted. Sex frustration moves Rose Armiger to murder Anthony Bream's little daughter in *The Other House*;³³ a passionate love,

³²Original appearance was in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, May-June, 1888.

³³Never dignified by inclusion in any of the collected editions, *The Other House* was rewritten from a dramatic version which was never staged. See LeRoy Phillips, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Henry James*, p. 116, and the *Nation*, January 28, 1897, p. 71. The limitation both of scenes and of time, as well as the direct action of murder, so foreign to James's usual method, remains as evidence of the earlier drama.

broken by social pressures and later given a chance to renew itself clandestinely, impels the Prince and Charlotte Stant to deceit in *The Golden Bowl*. An obsession mounting to a mother's insane zealotry in "The Author of Beltraffio" (1885)³⁴ leads to the death of her son. The contaminations or abominations surrounding innocence in *What Maisie Knew* (1897)³⁵ and "The Turn of the Screw"³⁶ graduate from simple arrested development of personality and lack of a mature sense of responsibility to grossest abnormalities of mind leading to horrors contingent on perversion. It is a general rule in James's works that when evil appears there is manifest also the sense of a disordered mind which tacitly explains but does not condone the sin.

James's formal education and his travels abroad as a youth and young man established other phases of his personality expressed in his works and therefore germane to any critical study. In New York his supervision by governesses was followed by attendance at a series of schools in which William and Henry were enrolled as "day-boys." Vagrant reading included certain of Poe's works, Maria S. Cummins's *The Lamplighter*, Hawthorne's early novels, and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; in Mrs. Stowe's novel he "lived and moved . . . with great intensity."³⁷ In 1855, when Henry was twelve years of age, the family began a three-year residence in Europe which Henry James, Sr., had long contemplated for the family's education. They spent the first summer in Geneva, and the following winter in London; they then settled in Paris for

³⁴Original appearance was in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, June-July, 1884.

³⁵Original appearance was in the *Chap-Book*, January 15-August 1, 1897.

³⁶Original appearance was in *Collier's Weekly*, February 5-April 16, 1898.

³⁷*A Small Boy and Others*, pp. 158-59; this book records James's childhood recollections through the period of early residence in Europe.

two years, breaking the pattern with two extended visits to Boulogne-sur-Mer, where Henry the son fell seriously ill of typhus during the second visit. Wherever they stayed, a tutor or a school carried forward the children's education, and places of interest, especially the art galleries, were visited. From the environment of art, artists, and studies James was later to draw much substance for his fiction.

The winter of 1858 was passed at Newport; but the family was in Geneva the following winter, at Bonn the next summer, and returned to America in the autumn of 1860. At Geneva both William and Henry had attended the *Ecole Préparatoire aux Écoles Spéciales*, where the severely scientific curriculum rendered Henry so helpless that he soon withdrew. Except for an interest in his brother William's study of psychology, the whole body of natural science was foreign to his interests and is absent from his books. At Bonn, however, things had been better for Henry; there he not only studied the modern languages but also, through English magazines, read novels by Dickens, Thackeray, Reade, Meredith, and Anthony Trollope.

On their return to America, William for a year gave himself to the study of art in William Hunt's studio, and Henry also haunted the place. There Henry met John La Farge, the illustrator, who introduced him to the literary qualities of Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850) and Prosper Mérimée (1803-70); Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* strongly appealed to the future novelist.

In 1862, when Henry followed brother William to Harvard, a new life was in the offing for him. He soon was able to trade Harvard for excursions in critical writing for the *North American Review*, which began accepting his opinions in 1864, for the *Nation*, established by Edwin Lawrence Godkin in 1865, and for the *Galaxy* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, both of which printed not only his reviews but his early stories. Professor James Russell Lowell, an editor of the *North American Review*, encouraged him. William Dean Howells, six years James's senior,

arrived in Boston in the spring of 1866 to become assistant editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and one of James's closest friends and guides, as well as his greatest American contemporary in the field of fiction. From 1864 on, James educated himself, and within twelve years he was permanently established in England.

The tide of the Civil War did not touch James directly. Nor does war in setting or substance appear in his novels. His younger brothers, Wilkinson and Robertson, were engaged in the conflict. Henry was hindered by a general apathy to war and by a specific injury suffered when, operating a pump handle of a fire-extinguishing machine, he was caught in "the acute angle between two high fences," and sustained an "obscure hurt" which drove him, even in later years, to frequent periods of rest flat on his back.³⁸ "Owen Wingrave" (1893) is James's only literary contribution to the world of war, and it indicates his complete aversion to it. For generations the Wingrave family, according to the story, had been prominent in military service, the profession to which Owen is dedicated, as becomes a man who wishes in accordance with family tradition to devote his life to the protection of a cherished civilization. But in the midst of his professional studies he reaches the conviction that Napoleon was a monstrous criminal, and he abandons his military course lest he also represent aggression. He is taunted by his family with the charge of insincerity born of cowardice; only a brave death, not on the battlefield, refutes this accusation.³⁹ James's own later course was consistent. He feared militarism. In 1898 the Spanish-American conflict appeared to him "the madness, the passion . . . of mechanical reverberation"; he denounced the "foul criminality" of the newspapers and asserted that from a "European" point of view "Spain *must*

³⁸ *Notes of a Son and Brother*, pp. 297-99.

³⁹ In the resolution of this story James's invention failed him; he invoked a haunted room which weakens an otherwise good tale requiring a natural rather than a supernatural acting force.

appear savagely assaulted.”⁴⁰ Sixteen years later the World War brought the greatest emotional distress to the ill and aging James. To him, in England, the Central Powers represented aggressive militarism. The spectacle of an invaded France called forth his earnest sympathies, for he thought the French embodied the union of the intellect and the emotions as had no other people since the ancient Greeks. So strong were his attachments that, the United States remaining neutral, James made his only available gesture, becoming a naturalized British citizen on July 26, 1915, a half year before his death on February 28, 1916.⁴¹

A survey of the educational factors in Henry James's life, from beginning to end, indicates that the interests which held his attention were modern. Although he wrote a sympathetic essay on the works of Epictetus, the great poets of the past did not inspire him as they did Longfellow and Lowell. Like the early Irving, James loved a sense of the past because it inspired a current romantic mood; but unlike the later Irving, James never turned historian. The complications forming the situations in his fiction are those he observed around him, or himself passed through in his creative career. Balzac, the hard-working exponent of realism whose works gave James a concept of the boundless possibilities of authorship, had been dead less than two decades when James began to write, and the literary forces the Frenchman had released were still ascending, influencing the generation after him. The authors James found agreeable to his genius were chiefly those writing in his generation. He lit his torch from flambeaus still strongly flaming in the hands of the living, and the oil he burned was refined in his own time.

⁴⁰Letter to William James (April 20, 1898) in *Letters*, I, 280-81.

⁴¹For his writings on the War, see *Within the Rim and Other Essays: 1914-15* (London, 1918), which contains not only the essay which gives the book its title, but also "Refugees in Chelsea," "France," and "The Long Wards." This volume preserves James's efforts to assist in civilian war work by means of his pen.

III. THE CRITIC

Henry James was both critic and novelist. He knew that true criticism was not parasitic, but an independent art, "one of the most difficult, the most delicate" of the arts. The critical sense, he wrote, "is absolutely rare, and the possession of the cluster of qualities that minister to it is one of the highest distinctions," demanding knowledge, large experience, perception, and full response to life and form.⁴²

The majority of the critical reviews and essays by Henry James were written in the earlier part of his career. They are original, carefully studied contributions to the field of literary comment; moreover, they served James in forming a sense of values and in establishing criteria to guide him in his own writing of fiction. The later essays not infrequently treat of authors of whom he had already said something; these second excursions add depth to his body of criticism.

When James considered style, his mind turned to thoughts on conciseness, firmness, neatness, and precision of phrase as

⁴²Quotations from "Criticism," in *Essays in London and Elsewhere* (New York, 1893).

For a study of the period 1864-80—from the first published review through the writing of *The Portrait of a Lady*—Cornelia Pulsifer Kelley's *The Early Development of Henry James* (Urbana, 1930) is indispensable. For a study of the critical works, see Morris Roberts's *Henry James's Criticism* (Cambridge, 1929). James's early critical pieces have been collected in *Views and Reviews*, with an introduction by LeRoy Phillips (Boston, 1908); *Notes and Reviews*, with a preface by Pierre de Chaignon la Rose (Cambridge, 1921); and *French Poets and Novelists* (London, 1878). For James's later critical essays, see *Partial Portraits* (London and New York, 1888), *Essays in London and Elsewhere* (New York and London, 1893), and *Notes on Novelists, with Some Other Notes* (New York and London, 1914), as well as his invaluable critical studies of his own fiction in the prefaces to the several volumes of *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*, The New York Edition [1907-17], or of *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*, New and Complete Edition [1921-23]. R. P. Blackmur has collected a number of James's most important prefaces in *The Art of the Novel* (New York, 1934).

represented by Prosper Mérimée,⁴³ whose lines reminded James of hammered metal, by Guy de Maupassant, whom James felt no one could surpass in "masculine firmness" and "quiet force,"⁴⁴ and by Alphonse Daudet.⁴⁵ James himself could never attain such sharp felicity of phrasing.⁴⁶ He admired, too, the marvelous sensory revelations of eye and nose described by Maupassant, the pictorial artistry and breadth of tenderness of Daudet, and the cleverness and brilliancy in the stories of Victor Cherbuliez⁴⁷ and Octave Feuillet.⁴⁸ For the moods of love he

⁴³For comments on Mérimée, see the *Nation*, February 12, 1874 and January 27, 1876, and the *Independent*, April 9, 1874—reprinted in *French Poets and Novelists* (London, 1878), and *Literature*, July 23, 1898.

⁴⁴Quotations from *Partial Portraits*, p. 263; this essay was reprinted from the *Fortnightly Review*, March, 1888.

⁴⁵For comments on Daudet see the *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1882, the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, August, 1883 (reprinted in *Partial Portraits*), and *Literature*, December 25, 1897.

⁴⁶In so short a study as this, one must pass over James's several articles on the descriptive methods of Theophile Gautier, which served him to advantage in doing many travel essays instinct with good taste and responsive sympathy. James sailed again for Europe in 1872, and remained until the autumn of 1874, spending a part of his time doing descriptive articles for the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Nation*. These and others were collected in a group of twenty-five under the title *Transatlantic Sketches* (1875). Gautier's influence on James's writing was publicly recognized as early as July, 1875 in the *Atlantic Monthly*, p. 113. Articles on Gautier by James appeared in the *Nation* for January 25, 1872, November 12, 1874, July 15, 1875, and in the *North American Review* for April, 1873 (reprinted in *French Poets and Novelists*) and October, 1874. For other volumes of travel sketches by James, note *Portraits of Places* (1883), *A Little Tour in France* (1885), *English Hours* (1905), *The American Scene* (1907), and *Italian Hours* (1909). Not until 1876 did James turn his thoughts definitely to England, and "A Passionate Pilgrim" (serial appearance in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March-April, 1871) was his only story with an English setting among over a dozen published between 1870 and 1875 which used Italian, French, or American backgrounds.

⁴⁷For comments on Cherbuliez see the *North American Review* for October, 1873 and the *Nation* for June 3, 1875 and June 29, 1876.

⁴⁸For comments on Feuillet see the *Nation* for July 30, 1868 and November 15, 1877.

studied the works of George Sand rather than life;⁴⁹ he marveled at the "facility and spontaneity" he found in her works, and held her to be the greatest of improvisators.⁵⁰

James was sensitive to plot for its service to structure and to the logic of cause and effect. He wrote of the rare technique of Maupassant and the perfect form of Gustave Flaubert, and the latter opened his mind to a conception of the value of the objective method, which James later refined.⁵¹ Further, Balzac was able by foreshortening to achieve vivid portrayals of whole areas of French life, and this structure James later adopted.⁵²

Yet when James felt that plot ruled characters with too rigid a hand, as in some of George Eliot's work, he spoke of it as "clumsily artificial."⁵³ For structure and plot, as James conceived them, were but methods for the portrayal of characters in a situation. He whose early charm lay in the "exquisite

⁴⁹ For Roderick Hudson, Dr. Kelley, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-89, has offered Henri Regnault as the prototype, and she credits James's delineation of the love of Roderick and Christina Light to lessons from George Sand's works.

⁵⁰ For his essays on George Sand see the *Nation*, July 16, 1868 and October 25, 1877, the *Galaxy*, July, 1877 (reprinted in *French Poets and Novelists*, from which the above quotation is taken, p. 163), and the *North American Review*, April, 1902 (reprinted in *Notes on Novelists, with Some Other Notes*).

⁵¹ For his essays on Flaubert see the *Nation*, June 4, 1874, "The Minor French Novelists" in the *Galaxy*, February, 1876 (partially reprinted as "Charles de Bernard and Gustave Flaubert" in *French Poets and Novelists* [London, 1878]), *Macmillan's Magazine*, March, 1893 (reprinted in *Essays in London and Elsewhere*), and *Notes on Novelists, with Some Other Notes*.

⁵² For his essays on Balzac see the *Galaxy*, December, 1875, and February, 1877 (both articles reprinted in *French Poets and Novelists*) and *Notes on Novelists, with Some Other Notes*.

⁵³ For his essays on the prose of George Eliot see the *Nation*, August 16, 1866 (reprinted in *Notes and Reviews*), and February 24, 1876; the *Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1866 (reprinted in *Views and Reviews*), December, 1876, and May, 1885 (both articles reprinted in *Partial Portraits*); quotation from *Notes and Reviews*, p. 200.

finish of his figures" ⁵⁴ revered those who could richly populate the world of art. James admired real characters, not the grotesque figures of Charles Dickens, molded by "exaggerated statements of types that really existed." ⁵⁵ George Eliot could be faulty in her plots, but her characters were lovely and firm. ⁵⁶ Balzac, James's early literary ideal, ⁵⁷ supplied him with many examples of character drawing which appealed to the young critic and author as excellent, entirely worthy of emulation. Of still greater importance in the mind of James were the women in the stories of Ivan Turgenev. As James has noted, the center of Turgenev's art resided not in plot but in character, which elevated his works to a plane of highest beauty and reality. To Turgenev's female characters James himself owed much, and he used the Russian's formula of impressing essential moral victories by placing the characters in situations of defeat from a worldly point of view. *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove* are but two pertinent examples of Turgenev's influence. ⁵⁸

The critical writings of James testify to his major interest in other than technical problems in the writing of fiction. One gathers that he admired George Eliot even more for her powers of thought, her broad sympathy, and her humor than for her "exquisite rhetoric." ⁵⁹ The simple greatness of Turgenev lacked the vanity which James found prevalent among French

⁵⁴ *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1877, pp. 741-42. The last installment of *The American* had appeared in this magazine in May.

⁵⁵ "The Limitations of Dickens," in the *Nation*, December 21, 1865 (reprinted in *Views and Reviews*); for quotation see the latter, p. 155.

⁵⁶ *Nation*, August 16, 1866; *Atlantic Monthly*, December, 1876.

⁵⁷ For elaborate comment on the influence of Balzac on James, see Kelley, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-88.

⁵⁸ For essays by James on Turgenev see the *North American Review*, April, 1874 (reprinted in *French Poets and Novelists*), the *Nation*, April 26, 1877, and the *Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1884 (reprinted in *Partial Portraits*).

⁵⁹ For quotation, see *Notes and Reviews*, p. 201.

authors and heartily disliked. Indeed, Turgenev and George Eliot were in James's estimation the two foremost living writers of fiction by reason of their high intellectual and emotional powers, their "richness of inspiration."⁶⁰ Insisting on emotional elevation, the young James found Anthony Trollope's novels "essentially, organically, consistently stupid";⁶¹ and later, when age had given the critic an appreciation of Trollope's common sense, he still thought that the Englishman's imagination reflected only borrowed light, and that his attitude toward art was traitorous, for Trollope took "suicidal satisfaction" in reminding the reader that fiction was only fiction.⁶²

An insistent consciousness of the necessity of moral values in literature guided James in his judgments. He disapproved of the attitude of most of the contemporary French writers on sex. Their works were a delight to his sense of style and technique, but an offense to his idea of the noble. True, he lived in the Victorian Age, but his judgments were not wholly formed by the period in which he lived; his was the repulsion of an individual who finds an unnecessary blemish in what he holds most dear. For he was discriminating in his imputations, occasionally defending books which were generally considered to be immoral. *Madame Bovary* and *Salammbô* are cases in point; James thought the moral implications of the former were unobjectionable, and he ascribed pure aesthetic values to the latter. This was not saying that Flaubert was truly great. Flaubert distressed James in that he labored diligently and successfully to attain perfection of form and style, yet he marred his work by

⁶⁰ Roberts, *Henry James's Criticism*, pp. 44-45.

⁶¹ For essays on Trollope see the *North American Review*, January, 1865 (reprinted in *Notes and Reviews*), the *Nation*, July 13 and September 28, 1865, and January 4, 1866 (all three reprinted in *Notes and Reviews*), and the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, July, 1883 (reprinted in *Partial Portraits*); the quotation is from *Notes and Reviews*, p. 130.

⁶² *Partial Portraits*, p. 116. As a moral writer, however, James admired Trollope above Zola and Flaubert. See *ibid.*, pp. 123-24.

a lack of moral and personal dignity. James also defended *L'Assommoir*, *Germinal*, and *La Débâcle*, for he discerned in these novels of Émile Zola a sound and honest purpose; and though Zola was to James's way of thinking a man devoid of taste, the deficiency was not a handicap to one who wrote of a world destitute of the same quality.⁶³ The lack of taste merely rendered Zola's novels unfit to be classed with books of higher conceptual value. Balzac, too, was deficient in a "natural sense of morality"⁶⁴ and was at once "one of the finest of artists and one of the coarsest."⁶⁵ Maupassant was common, lecherous, sex-obsessed; and Pierre Loti manifested "vulgarity of spirit and thinness of inspiration."⁶⁶ Finally, Alphonse Daudet, a writer most delicate and tender, an extraordinary stylist, and greatest of all pictorial novelists, could not be called truly great, for he failed of moral insight. Thus James decreed.⁶⁷

And so it came about that James felt spiritually lonely in Paris, and in 1876 he crossed the Channel to reside in London.⁶⁸ He felt more comfortable in the land of George Eliot, whose novels were full of high purpose and of a passion which did not conquer conscience. Her world was above the world of George Sand, who frequently was unable to discriminate between virtue

⁶³ *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1903 (reprinted in *Notes on Novelists, with Some Other Notes*), contains James's reasoned opinions on the work of Zola.

⁶⁴ *French Poets and Novelists*, p. 89.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁶⁶ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁶⁷ For essays by James on Daudet see the *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1882, and the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, August, 1883; the latter is reprinted in *Partial Portraits*.

⁶⁸ From 1865 to 1869 James wrote approximately fifty reviews and critical articles while residing in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York; he then returned to Europe and remained for slightly over a year; he was back in America in April, 1870, after the death of Mary Temple, his cousin. In 1872 he was again in Europe, remaining until 1874; during the latter year he was in America, but left to take residence in Paris in 1875, from whence he moved to London.

and vice, as James readily saw, and who often failed to recognize sin. He admired the sound manhood and the robust love of life and study in James Russell Lowell; and he marveled, with a hint of healthy envy I think, at the fullness of Lowell's mind, which had been richly nurtured by American life as well as by the treasury of the European continent.⁶⁹ The tales and the three greatest novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne seemed to James to be the best representatives of imaginative literature America had as yet produced; and he saw strength, however provincial it might be, in the New Englander's continual thoughts on the nature of sin.⁷⁰ Nor, in this connection, should one fail to mention the tribute to the moral life paid by James in his essay on Emerson. Emerson cared little for fiction or painting—James's two greatest passions—yet James clearly admired him because he could address the souls of men simply, clearly, definitely, with dignity and moral illumination.⁷¹

Philosophically James belonged to the school of Realism; he was convinced that the novel was the best form of art to represent the whole truth in life. His criticism and his own fiction place him there. He observed that Flaubert stemmed from Balzac, and Zola from Flaubert; and he himself was touched by all three. Honesty, truth to fact, however unlovely, made Zola's works honorable fiction in James's mind. But though James defended Realism, he did not practice Realism in any narrow sense. He drew away from the Naturalism of Zola; he did not even follow the path of Garland's "veritism." There was too little of the reporter in him, too little of the social critic, and too much of the creative artist and speculative philosopher for him to follow the ways of Realism to farthest

⁶⁹See essay on Lowell in the *Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1892; it was reprinted in *Essays in London and Elsewhere*.

⁷⁰*Hawthorne*, by Henry James (English Men of Letters Series), 1879.

⁷¹*Macmillan's Magazine*, December, 1887; it was reprinted in *Partial Portraits*.

limits. He accepted and used some of the liberties and services of Romanticism, though he never would have called himself a Romanticist. Perhaps he may best be described as a psychological Realist. Katharine Fullerton Grould has recalled that James was once adored "chiefly because he seemed to us to be the only person who had ever recorded the changes that go on in the mind *exactly as they go on in the mind.*"⁷²

In Boston, as a young fashioner of stories, James had realized that his penchant for analysis interfered with narrative force and also that if he strictly followed the course of Realism he would lose in form and plot. Howells called his attention to the works of Hawthorne, and James discovered that a bit of the Romantic improved his own stories. "A Problem" (1868) and "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" (1868) are definitely Hawthornesque; and "Gabrielle de Bergerac" (1869), which has been considered the best of his early stories, is a compound of Romanticism and George Sand. This tendency to employ Romance for the greater glory of Realism and Truth led James to disapprove of Hawthorne's distinction between a "novel" and a "romance," which the latter had defined in his Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*. Hawthorne was of the opinion that a romance, though it would sin "unpardonably" if it deviated from the essential truth in the human heart, may properly enjoy licenses in invention, selection, and arrangement of material to heighten effects which a novel may not employ. James did not wish to be held in subjection by either form. He wrote novels, but he put in them whatever romantic license he wished to use. His criticism avoids the distinction.

Because James believed that prose fiction excelled poetry as a medium of expression of life, of emotions and ideas, he held

⁷²*Saturday Review of Literature*, October 22, 1927, p. 233. For romance see: "A Problem," *Galaxy*, June, 1868; "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," "A Most Extraordinary Case," "DeGrey: A Romance," "Gabrielle de Bergerac," *Atlantic Monthly*, February, April, July, 1868, July-September, 1869; Kelley, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

the art of the novelist in highest esteem. He summarized this conception in his mature years in "The Art of Fiction" (1885)⁷³ when for over a decade and a half he had practiced his profession. A "small, pale, noticeable man" at this time, "with a short, pointed beard, and with large, piercingly observant eyes,"⁷⁴ he had lived in London for nearly a decade, absorbed in his work. Walter Besant had recently written an essay on the same subject which James believed failed adequately to describe the true nobility of the profession. He took up the work where Besant had stopped. The novelist, James wrote, must possess the combined virtues of the historian, the philosopher, and the painter; for he must record human life accurately and truly, he must assess and interpret conduct wisely, and he must portray his findings with artistry. In the performance of these duties he must command skillful technique, depth of comprehension, and intensity of experience. It was by this scale that James as a mature critic measured the works of others, and as a novelist patterned his own fiction.

As a critic, James grew progressively more discerning, and his labors as a novelist continually deepened and refined his critical perceptions. His early reviews, which were for him a motivated liberal-arts education in literature, reached presumptive conclusions too definitely based on preconceived sets of principles that he did not deeply understand. This may be noted especially in his essay on Whitman, for James was weakest when judging poetry; but it obtains also in his remarks on fiction. Yet even in this period he revealed his interest in form and his insistence on fidelity to truth to the human heart and mind. Later, in the 1870's, his critical writings indicated an increasing appreciation of form, pictorial artistry, brilliancy,

⁷³ *Longman's Magazine*, September, 1884; as a book, in company with Walter Besant's essay by the same title, 1885; it was reprinted in *Partial Portraits*.

⁷⁴ A. C. Benson, *Memories and Friends* (New York, 1924), p. 217.

felicitous phrasing, and plot in the service of structure. One may quite accurately say that James's ideal was a union of French artistry with English soundness of thought and morality. As the years passed, he became increasingly sensitive to discriminating perceptions in the infinite complexities of a moral experience, an idea, or subject of thought. The novel, as the best art form to attain what he called "an immense and exquisite correspondence with life," was his absorbing passion. Always in mind contemporaneous with the period in which he lived and moved, he did not adequately recognize the great tradition and service of poetry as a revelatory art. This limitation had its compensations, however, for it led him the more directly to his fourth critical period—the period of his prefaces to his own prose fiction in the New York Edition, which began to appear in 1907. No single original body of criticism espousing and appreciating prose fiction has been more freighted with discerning observations on form, taste, and methods of presenting intricate truths in life which "lift up the heart."

IV. THE CRAFTSMAN

1. *Beginnings. The "Germ"*

As a craftsman, James made lasting contributions to the art of fiction. They are applied in his bookshelf of stories and novels, and they are carefully set forth in the prefaces he wrote for the collective New York Edition. They furnish each succeeding generation of readers new thoughts on techniques; they distinguish his work; and they are a part of the achievement which has marked him as a unique figure in prose literature, and one of its great masters.

His first volume, *A Passionate Pilgrim, and Other Tales* (1875),⁷⁵ appeared when James was thirty-two years of age,

⁷⁵Original appearance of "A Passionate Pilgrim" was in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March–April, 1871.

and it was readily recognized by his contemporaries as the work of a skilled writer. William Dean Howells, his friend of nearly a decade and the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, was more than cordial when he wrote: "In richness of expression and splendor of literary performance, we may compare him with the greatest, and find none greater than he."⁷⁶ As to whether the title story or "Madame de Mauves"⁷⁷ was the best of the six in the volume, opinion differed;⁷⁸ but these two, and "The Madonna of the Future"⁷⁹ formed a triumvirate of tales needing no novice's apology. They were the revised work of one who had been painstakingly employed for several years. His craftsmanship was good, and the critics of his day could see that he had studied sound models of his period to good effect, the *Nation* on one occasion mentioning the names of Balzac, Musset, Feuillet, and Gautier.⁸⁰

There were others. *Roderick Hudson*, James's first novel to be published in book form,⁸¹ not only owes some of its passion

⁷⁶ *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1875, p. 490; entire review, pp. 490-95.

⁷⁷ Original appearance was in the *Galaxy*, February-March, 1874.

⁷⁸ Howells, in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, November, 1882, pp. 25-29, thought "A Passionate Pilgrim" was James's best short story to date; a critic in *Scribner's Monthly*, April, 1875, pp. 766-67, chose "Madame de Mauves" as the best of the six.

⁷⁹ Original appearance was in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1873. The other three stories were: "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," "The Last of the Valerii," and "Eugene Pickering"; the first has been mentioned; the other two originally appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January and October-November, 1874 respectively.

⁸⁰ June 24, 1875, pp. 425-27.

⁸¹ *Roderick Hudson* was published serially in the *Atlantic Monthly*, January-December, 1875, and as a book in 1876. *Watch and Ward* had appeared serially in the same magazine during August-December, 1871, but was not issued as a book until 1878. The book edition of *Watch and Ward* was advertised in *Publishers' Weekly*, May 11 and July 6, 1878, as having been revised from the serial form. The *Nation* also mentioned the revision (August 22, 1878, pp. 117-18), but remarked that the novel was still a poor piece of work. James concurred in this estimation, and it did not appear in the collective New York Edition.

to George Sand but also some of its method of character portrayal to Balzac.⁸² One might even attribute to the influence of Balzac a slight coloration of the mood of James as he tramped the streets of London for the varied social milieu he needed for *The Princess Casamassima*. James himself paid tribute to Turgenev's assistance. The same type of story appealed to both men. *The American* is one of several examples: in the "Preface" to the New York Edition James wrote of Christopher Newman that he was "cruelly wronged" by those "pretending to represent the highest possible civilization,"⁸³ yet he rose from outer defeat to inner victory through soundness of character. Two other novels of this general type are *Washington Square*⁸⁴ and *The Portrait of a Lady*.⁸⁵ Catherine Sloper, in the former, is sadly frustrated; and the portrait of Isabel Archer in the latter story is of one who rises in personal dignity though caught in the meshes of an undeserved fate.

Even as early as 1876 critics phrased certain of James's characteristics with a fair degree of accuracy. Mary Garland, in *Roderick Hudson*, was recognized as an excellently portrayed character. In this novel, too, were closeness in elaboration of characters, an objectively psychological approach and treatment, and "remarkable flexibility of thought and plastic power of

⁸² For early influences, see Kelley, *op. cit.*, and Grattan, *The Three Jameses: A Family of Minds*. Balzac's influence is especially treated by C. Cestre in "La France dans l'œuvre de Henry James," *Revue Anglo-Américaine*, X, 1-13 (1922-23).

⁸³ New York Edition, II, vi. For reviews see the *Galaxy*, July, 1877, pp. 135-38; *Literary World*, July, 1877, pp. 29-30; *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1877, pp. 406-07; *Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1877, pp. 108-09.

⁸⁴ For reviews see *Lippincott's Magazine*, February, 1881, pp. 214-15; *Scribner's Monthly*, March, 1881, pp. 795-96; *The Californian*, April, 1881, pp. 376-77.

⁸⁵ For reviews see the *Nation*, February 2, 1882, pp. 102-03; *Literary World*, December 17, 1881, pp. 473-74; *The Californian*, January, 1882, pp. 86-87; *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, February, 1882, p. 474.

expression," in which there was "no cadence, no modulation, that is not executed with the easiest precision."⁸⁶ Those who preferred rapid action naturally disliked the "excessive elaboration of details" so characteristic of James.⁸⁷

There was no change in critical opinion when *The Europeans* (1878) was published. Readers were again told not to expect from James a story full of action. He lacked the gift of interesting invention; readers were not held by an enthralling plot or a series of lively occurrences. He delighted, rather, through contrast of characters, to discuss every possible thought pertaining to a situation, and to develop ideas objectively through conversation.⁸⁸ He was quite the equal of anyone in "keen analytic delineation of character and motive" and the master of a "carefully studied and exquisitely finished style."⁸⁹ *The Europeans* was in no way so good as *The American*, but *The American* was "perhaps the finest fragment in modern fiction."⁹⁰ When James did a second-rate novel, of course, the absence of lively action left the story with little justification for being. *Confidence* (1880)⁹¹ is an example: some there were who thought it rather a study than a story, and therefore they held that the narrative form was unfortunate. Later criticism was divided, as book after book appeared; but always James was recognized for his craftsmanship. Even such a collection as *The Real Thing and Other Tales* (1893)⁹² was appreciated. *The Literary World*

⁸⁶ For quotation see the *North American Review*, April, 1876, p. 424.

⁸⁷ For quotation see *Scribner's Monthly*, February, 1876, p. 589; see also the *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1876, pp. 237-38.

⁸⁸ *Literary World*, March 29, 1879, pp. 105-06, quoting the *London Spectator*; *Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1879, pp. 106-08.

⁸⁹ *Literary World*, January 18, 1879, p. 28.

⁹⁰ *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1879, pp. 167-69.

⁹¹ For reviews see the *Nation*, March 25, 1880, pp. 239-40; *Literary World*, April 10, 1880, pp. 119-20, in which Susan Coolidge referred to the situation as "unclean"; and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, May, 1880, pp. 945-46.

⁹² This collection included "Sir Dominick Ferrand," originally titled "Jersey Villas" in the *Cosmopolitan*, July-August, 1892;

reported the stories as being depressing, but regarded James as "a realistic describer of minor events on which life issues may depend."⁹³ *The Critic: A Weekly Review of Literature and the Arts* praised "The Real Thing" for its theme, "Sir Dominick Ferrand" for its plot and dramatic qualities, and "The Chaperon" and "Nona Vincent" for theme and narrative power.⁹⁴

It is an educational experience in criticism to watch James's craftsmanship at work on what he often termed in the prefaces to the New York Edition the "germ" of a narrative. James remarked that "The Author of Beltraffio" owes its origin to the statement of a friend regarding the embarrassments of an author recently dead, one of which had been the objection of his wife to the contents of the stories he wrote. Specifically this referred to Edmund Gosse's account of a "dark incident" in the life of Robert Louis Stevenson which Gosse was later "horrified" to discover developed by James into a *nouvelle*.⁹⁵ Yet beyond literal description of surface features, James did not use much of the story. As soon as the progress of any oral narrative had given him an idea, he desired to hear no more, lest actual details hold his imagination in too severe restraint. The Gosse story became "The Author of Beltraffio," in which Mark Ambient, the velvet-jacketed husband and author, is Stevenson. The rest is largely James's imagination. He introduced a psychopathic wife whose determination to keep her son from being contaminated by what she mistakingly believes to be her husband's low morality leads her to a procrastination resulting

"Nona Vincent," originally in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, February-March 1892; "The Chaperon," originally in the *Atlantic Monthly*, November-December, 1891; and "Greville Fane." The first two mentioned in this note were not reprinted in the collective New York Edition.

⁹³ April 8, 1893, p. 113.

⁹⁴ April 15, 1893, p. 230. See also the *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1893, pp. 695-96.

⁹⁵ Edmund Gosse, *Aspects and Impressions* (New York, 1922), p. 30.

in the death of their child. The few scenes, carefully selected and developed, treat with high artistry the sensitive nature of the husband and the affliction of the wife.

James's attitude toward the usability of materials is again shown in "The Real Thing," the germ of which was an anecdote by his friend George du Maurier, illustrator and novelist.⁹⁶ The tale recounts the sad fate of a poor major and his wife seeking employment. An artist, at first delighted in the prospect of using them as models of gentility, later is surprised to find them to be so truly the "real thing" that he cannot adapt them to his needs. Had he been a photographer, they would have served him; but he cannot use them as parts of a larger conception to be caught on canvas. They give his imagination no freedom; they are what they are, and he can do nothing with them. James, like the artist, could use the "germ" of an occurrence, but not the whole "real thing." This is the method of Hawthorne, revealed in his published notebooks. It is the method of the romancer.

A more elaborate study of the same theme is done in *The Sacred Fount* (1901), which James rightly considered too weak for the selective New York Edition but which is none the less an allegory revealing his point of view on art. In this novel an author, during an extended English week-end visit, perceives that Gilbert Long, heretofore a witless ass, has suddenly acquired vitality and wit through association with Mrs. May Server, perhaps at the latter's expense. The author further notices a subtle change in Mr. and Mrs. Brissenden. At their marriage the husband had appeared to be much younger than his wife; since then he has aged prematurely, and she has become youthful. What is the reason for these mutations? Can it be that one person may be host and another parasite? Herein lies the "germ" of the story. By elaborate speculations the author builds a solution, a "perfect palace of thought." But when the finished structure is compared with nature's architec-

⁹⁶New York Edition, Preface, XVIII, xx-xxi.

ture, it cannot be reconciled. Life, then, is a chain of unplotted events; authors attempt to place the events in logical patterns, but the patterns may not be life.⁹⁷ Fiction, unlike life, offers man the opportunity rationally to develop certain elements of life and to exhibit them in plotted patterns of cause and effect unmodified, unmolested by the uncontrollable fates which in life destroy these patterns. In passing, it should be noted that, although the story by the very nature of its theme must fade away at the close, the structure is in the typical Jamesian dramatic method. The author in the tale, and those with whom he engages in interminable conversations, are as actors on a stage, and the readers are as members of an audience; characters and readers together build the palace during the same course of time, even as actors and audience together experience the plot of a play.

"The Siege of London" (1883),⁹⁸ a well-executed story of an American divorcée who, rebuffed in New York, achieves sound social standing and a man of title in London, had its origin in James's dislike of *Le Demi-monde* of the younger Dumas. *The Aspern Papers* (1888),⁹⁹ one of James's more delicate fabrications, was conceived in the discovery that Jane Clairmont, stepsister of Shelley's second wife and mother of Byron's daughter Allegra, had lived in elderly retirement in Venice even during the time James had haunted the city, and that a fellow lodger in the pension of the aged woman had taken a room in the hope of securing some literary crumbs.¹⁰⁰ James did not visit her, but he converted the story into the tale of a critic who

⁹⁷ See Wilson Follett, "Henry James's Portrait of Henry James," *New York Times Book Review*, August 23, 1936, pp. 2, 16.

⁹⁸ Originally published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, January-February, 1883. *The Siege of London*, *The Pension Beaurepas*, and *The Point of View* was issued the same year, the second story originally in the *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1879, and the third story originally in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, December, 1882.

⁹⁹ Original publication was in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March-May, 1888.

¹⁰⁰ New York Edition, Preface, XII, vii-viii.

desired to obtain some confidential letters of a literary celebrity lately deceased, but was unwilling to pay the price asked—marriage into the family of the former poet's mistress.¹⁰¹

The Spoils of Poynton (1897) evolved from a remark James heard regarding the squabble of an English mother and her son over "valuable furniture" left to the son by the father.¹⁰² From this slight suggestion, this "germ," James was able to write one of his better novels by reason of the fact that he could bring to the theme an abiding interest of high emotional order in the power of the past over human thoughts and emotions. At the same time he could apply his theory that character overflows into surroundings—furniture, objects of art; accoutrements, therefore, become indexes to character.

It is characteristic of James's craftsmanship infinitely to elaborate the "germ." *The Spoils of Poynton*, *What Maisie Knew*, "The Turn of the Screw," and *The Sacred Fount*, were originally conceived as stories not to exceed 8,000 to 10,000 words.¹⁰³ Theodora Bosanquet, the typist who recorded his later dictated novels, has stated that it is almost true to say that all the stories in *The Finer Grain* (1910) were written in an effort to supply *Harper's Monthly Magazine* with "one" five-thousand-word short story.¹⁰⁴ This he never achieved.

¹⁰¹"Nona Vincent" springs from James's theatrical labors. From the ashes of his interest in playwriting arose the story of Allan Wayworth, a playwright who so thoroughly identifies his heroine with a real woman that the interpreting actress fails until she meets the prototype.

¹⁰²New York Edition, Preface, X, vii. For reviews, see the *Nation*, July 1, 1897, p. 18, and the *Literary World*, April 17, 1897, pp. 126-27.

¹⁰³*Letters*, I, 408. Likewise he intended *The Awkward Age* to be a "thin" book, as he mentioned in his Preface to the New York Edition, IX, vii, but it grew beyond 450 pages. *The Wings of the Dove* he later termed (unfairly, I think) "too long-winded and minute a thing, but well-meaning" (*Letters*, I, 399).

¹⁰⁴Theodora Bosanquet, *Henry James at Work* (London, 1924), p. 8. The stories included in *The Finer Grain* appeared originally as follows: "The Velvet Glove," "Mora Montravers," and "A Round

"Crapy Cornelia," the one finally submitted, ran through two numbers of the magazine.

As one contemplates the initial forces that started James on his way to developing stories, many crowd forward to be mentioned. "The Turn of the Screw" grew from a story he heard of children visited by spirits of "bad" servants.¹⁰⁵ It is a far cry from this suggestion to one of the most intricate tales of horror and perversion in English.¹⁰⁶ *The Ambassadors* was written as the result of a tale related to James by a friend who had heard it from "a man of distinction,"¹⁰⁷ and brought associations of an old Paris garden; it is in some respects his best novel. The list must not be prolonged beyond *The Wings of the Dove*. Never did James develop a basic idea to better advantage. In this case the novel rose from the influence of a young woman. Milly Theale, James's best character, was drawn from memories of Mary Temple, a cousin whom he held in most tender regard. Early in her adult life she died from the ravages of tuberculosis. Mary's was Milly's fate—to die an early death; likewise her problem was Milly's—to live as fully as possible in the limited time allotted to her. James, deeply

of Visits" in the *English Review* for March, 1909, August–September, 1909, and April–May, 1910 respectively, "Crapy Cornelia" in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* for October, 1909, and "The Bench of Desolation" in *Putnam's Magazine* for October, 1909–January, 1910. None of the stories was included in the selective New York Edition, though some are worthy of the distinction.

¹⁰⁵ New York Edition, Preface, XII, xv. Edmund Gosse, in *Aspects and Impressions*, p. 38, reported the narrator was Archbishop Benson. Robert Lee Wolff has shown that James was also indebted to T. Griffiths's "striking picture," titled "The Haunted House," for a number of details; see *American Literature*, XIII, 6–8 (March, 1941).

¹⁰⁶ The oral story became a challenge to James to see what he could do toward placing two children in the worst possible environment, entirely surrounded by evil. Perhaps the erotic forces in it were the reason James called it "rather a shameless pot-boiler." See *Letters*, I, 300. It is in its way definitely a work of art.

¹⁰⁷ New York Edition, Preface, XXI, v–vii.

moved by her blighted earthly pattern, found in her life the thread of his story. The plot he was required to invent, but not the heroine; she was already established in all her brightness. Certain of Miss Temple's letters, printed in *Notes of a Son and Brother*, are instinct with the personality which James's craftsmanship wove into the novel. Her objective point of view, her usually cheerful attitude through periods of lapse and of recovery, the supreme sweetness of her life made poignant by occasional, soon-repressed cries from within, are in the letters and in the novel.

2. Plot

A preconceived, thoroughly devised plot, supported by a suitable structural method, was especially important to James, who could not depend, as did Scott and Cooper and Dickens, on spontaneous invention at every turn. Moreover, unlike most novelists, James insisted more and more on the dramatic method for working out the problems he posed for his fiction. He was sensitive to plot for its expository service as well as for its service to logic, that is, to cause and effect.

James's plots generally culminate in some decision made by the characters, or in an improved appreciation of the nature of a situation. Some of the designs are quite simple. In "The Madonna of the Future," the whole force of the story is developed through a few scenes, progressive in time, leading to a final recognition by the artist that he will never fulfill his only sustaining ambition, to do a superb madonna and child. "Lady Barberina" (1884)¹⁰⁸ is built on a simple international conflict in which the usual tables are turned. An English girl, marrying an American, becomes so dissatisfied with life in New York that she leaves for England, never to return. Thus James reversed

¹⁰⁸Original publication was in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, May-July, 1884; the spelling was changed to "Barbarina" in the collective editions of 1907-17 and 1921-23.

the general social law of international marriages: usually the stories tell of rich American girls given in wedlock to poor but titled Englishmen. "Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie" (1900)¹⁰⁹ is a contrasting variant of the same story, plotted in the same manner. An American girl in Europe, refusing to be belittled by certain European social rigidities, breaks her engagement and returns home to Poughkeepsie and a happy married life in America. "The Patagonia" (1889)¹¹⁰ is typical of the simple plot fashioned of a few closely written scenes. Grace Mavis, of Boston, one of James's several "plain" heroines, discovers love while on board the *Patagonia* bound for Liverpool; but, frustrated, she drowns herself at the close of the voyage rather than marry the man to whom she is conventionally betrothed and who is awaiting her in England.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹Original publication was in the *Cornhill Magazine*, May, 1900.

¹¹⁰Original appearance was in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, August-September, 1888.

¹¹¹The list of stories with simple plots is a long one. The following examples are among those that may be perused with profit. "Master Eustace" (1885), originally published in the *Galaxy*, November, 1871, is the chronicle of a boy's refusal to accept Mr. Cope, his mother's second husband, but first and only love, as his stepfather; Mr. Cope is the boy's true father. "Lord Beaupré" (1893) is an account of a young nobleman so besieged by mothers with marriageable daughters that he takes refuge in a fictitious engagement, and later laments the caddish trickery. "The Private Life" (1893), originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1892, is an experiment in the dual personality type. "Sir Dominick Ferrand" is the tale of Peter Brown's love of Mrs. Ryves, a widow, and his burning of the late lord's papers when he discovers that Sir Dominick was the father of Mrs. Ryves, born out of wedlock to a governess. "Paste" (1900), which owes its origin to Maupassant's "La Parure," is a tale of the turmoil of a young man who, if he believes a family string of pearls is real, must assume a dark past in his late mother's life; for the string had been hers, and she had been a struggling actress and his father a poor cleric. "The Great Condition" (1900), originally printed in the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, June, 1899, is a parable to the effect that a lover is undeserving who allows himself to wonder whether the one he loves has had a "past." "The Two Faces" (1903), originally published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, June, 1901,

Plot is more essential in a James story than in the fiction of some other writers, for it often bears the entire burden of the theme. In analyzing a situation to the ultimate, James was sometimes willing to devise a plot so precise and so symmetrical that the reader must invoke a willing suspension of disbelief in order to enjoy the harmonious pattern and the added thought thus brought to the theme. This is well illustrated by "The Way It Came" (1896), later called "The Friends of the Friends" (1909).¹¹² A man while absent from his mother has a vision of her at the time of her death; and his experience is paralleled by a woman's vision of her father at his death. The two psychic persons never meet, but the man's fiancée breaks her engagement when, the psychic woman's husband dying, the engaged man begins regularly to see visions of the widow. "The Papers" (1893) is another elaborately devised, balanced, closely plotted story of the unfailing luck and technique of Sir A. B. C. Beadel-Muffet, K.C.B., in gaining publicity though his accomplishments are trivial, while worthy Mortimer Marshal, in need of publicity, goes unmentioned. In type, it resembles "The Abasement of the Northmores," but it is more fantastically

and "The Tone of Time" (1903), originally published in *Scribner's Magazine*, November, 1900, are stories of the venom of a woman scorned; they are forerunners of the excellent tale, "The Bench of Desolation." "Broken Wings" (1903), originally published in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, December, 1900, is of the O. Henry type; two lovers in equally hard circumstances, each silently of the opinion that the other is doing well, repress their love. "The Tree of Knowledge" and "The Abasement of the Northmores" are more elaborate. The first turns on the philosophical axis of the value of sustaining an illusion; the latter expresses James's faith in the ultimate recognition of quality, though it be not appreciated during a lifetime. "The Story in It" (1903) is a small debate on the validity of mental sins. "Mrs. Medwin" (1903), originally printed in *Punch*, August 28-September 18, 1901, exhibits Mamie Cutter plotting with all her professional skill to place Mrs. Medwin in upper English society.

¹¹²Original publication was in the *Chap-Book*, May 1, 1896.

developed. "The Wheel of Time" (1893)¹¹³ is patterned as rigidly as a drama. A "plain" woman, Fanny Knockor, failing to win Maurice, marries a second choice; a generation later she sees Maurice's "plain" daughter die heart-stricken because she cannot capture the love of Fanny's good-looking son, Arthur. Her elders' respect for appearances, in "Mora Montravers," drives Mora into a foolish, temporary, loveless marriage with an artist. Among the novels, *What Maisie Knew* is an excellent example: the many marriages, liaisons, divorces, and remarriages are arranged in a symmetry of doubtful occurrence in life, yet they serve James well in his purpose to bring all possible combinations into play around the child Maisie.

Some of the plots rise to high fantasy. "The Great Good Place" (1900)¹¹⁴ is an exquisitely written story of a man who finds himself so pressed by labors ahead that he welcomes an opportunity to revel in a sense of "the endless roll of serenity," surrounded in monastic seclusion. One actual day is sufficient to restore his mental health, though James invoked the feeling of a long, slow passage of time. The story is a minute portrayal of psychopathic elation in a state of imaginary refuge. Fantasy also appears in the several stories containing ghosts or ghostly visions. James rather enjoyed the service of ghosts as an economical means of creating wonder, horror, or a sense of the past. In "The Real Right Thing" (1900) the ghost of Ashton Doyne acts as ambassador on a mission to this world to prevent the publication of Doyne's biography. Among other stories, James used ghosts in "The Jolly Corner" (1909)¹¹⁵ and "The Turn of the Screw" in "earnest aversion to waste and from the sense that in art economy is always beauty."¹¹⁶ Closely

¹¹³Original publication was in the *Cosmopolitan*, December, 1892-January, 1893. For reviews see the *Critic*, October 21, 1893, p. 253, and the *Nation*, November 30, 1893, p. 417.

¹¹⁴Original publication was in *Scribner's Magazine*, January, 1900.

¹¹⁵Original publication was in the *English Review*, December, 1908.

¹¹⁶New York Edition, Preface, XVII, xx.

associated with the ghost fantasy are the stories employing transmogrification of characters to invoke the past. The best of these is *The Sense of the Past* (1917), an uncompleted novel describing in full detail the progress of Ralph Pendrel in assuming the character of an earlier member of the family tree. Somewhat associated with fantasy also is "The Beast in the Jungle." It is an exceptional contribution in literature, being the chronicle of a wholly eventless life. The theme rises above the whimsical and capricious; it reaches true significance and tragedy as a picture of an empty life. Marcher, vaguely but correctly surmising that his star has destined him to lead a singular existence, lets time flow past him, idly waiting for the supreme experience that will make his life unique. All normal possibilities escape him, even the love of May Bartram, until at the close he comes slowly to the terrible realization that he is to be the symbol of a man to whom nothing ever happened. Nothing strikes him; he is left desolate and alone, even as he stands at the grave which holds the remains of May.

For longer fiction, James found that the use of massive blocks suited him best. The small chapter units are gathered into major parts or "books," and these in turn are set solidly in their places. The "books" are the essential units; readers think of his novels in terms of them rather than in terms of the chapters. A few examples will suffice. *The Ambassadors* is composed of twelve "books" into which the thirty-six chapters are gathered. *The Awkward Age* is built of ten major divisions, which James envisioned as ten "lamps" around the story, each illuminating a "social occasion."¹¹⁷ *The Wings of the Dove* is also constructed of ten major "books," each treating in detail a major situation applying to the fate of Milly Theale. The large blocks of *The Golden Bowl* are themselves grouped into two sections, the prince being the uniting principle of the first part and the princess of the second. This method of blocking, as all who

¹¹⁷New York Edition, Preface, IX, xvi-xvii.

have read the complete works of James know, arises from his disposition to elaborate his materials. Where others would write a chapter, James wrote a "book." His nature revolted against anything short of complete development so far as he could imagine it. This it was which extended his works until ideas intended for short stories became "our ideal, the beautiful and blest *nouvelle*,"¹¹⁸ and *nouvelles* became novels.¹¹⁹

3. Choice of Narrator

Whenever an author is faced with a story to tell, there arises also the problem: What manner of person shall the narrator be, and what relation shall he bear to the story? James was on many occasions the impersonal third person as omniscient author, as in *The Bostonians*, *The Princess Casamassima*, and *The Tragic Muse* (1890). But increasingly he hid his omniscience in assuming the relationship of a playwright to his characters as in *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Ambassadors*, *The Awkward Age*, and *The Golden Bowl*. He was careful in his omniscience not to destroy the illusion of reality by referring to himself as the author; he did not do as did Fielding and Anthony Trollope. More and more he sought to hide himself from the reader's consciousness. He has mentioned, in this connection, that in *The Bostonians*, *The Princess Casamassima*, and *The Tragic Muse* he went "behind" his characters at will, that in *The American* and *What Maisie Knew* he restricted himself, going

¹¹⁸ New York Edition, Preface, XV, vii.

¹¹⁹ As an illustration, consider *Washington Square*. The basic theme is simple: an unprincipled, avaricious young fellow wishes to marry a girl solely for her inheritance. The story is extended by elaborate conversational scenes adroitly, objectively, dispassionately handled in realistic vein. The situation is confined principally to four persons and the fate of the young woman, but the parts are fully analyzed. Note also *The Bostonians*—the minute presentation of the situation with all its "isms," followed by interminable analyses, done in the objective method, James revealing the ideas from the outside inward.

"behind" only "singly," and that in *The Awkward Age* he did not go "behind" at all. In the last-mentioned novel James became nearly the dramatist in technique. He did not foreshorten in time or material: to have done so, as in "Julia Bride" (1909)¹²⁰ and *The Tragic Muse*, would have interfered with his dramatic method. The characters are like actors, and, as Percy Lubbock has remarked, the unquoted passages may be likened to stage directions.¹²¹ Readers of James's works will discover that his use of the dramatic method came to perfection after 1895, when he forsook his ambition and efforts to do popular stage dramas. Thus he brought to the art of fiction a singular technique. In his last completed novel, *The Golden Bowl*, he created Mrs. Assingham that he might keep from going "behind" his characters; her conversations with the main characters reveal the progressing stages of the situation objectively.

It is equally interesting to watch James at work devising methods of placing the author in the story by use of the first person singular pronoun. When the author, as "I," is himself in the confines of the story, it becomes a complete entity: no one is working on it from the outside, and the reader's attention remains always within the pages. Further, if the author as "I" be not the chief character, there is no technical difficulty in showing the major characters from several points of view. Finally, the author as "I" lends verisimilitude to plot and event. James employed several kinds of relationships of the author as "I" in his stories. Thus in "The Real Thing" the "I" is an artist hiring models, and it is he who employs the chief characters, a

¹²⁰Original publication was in *Harper's Magazine*, March-April, 1908.

¹²¹*The Craft of Fiction* (New York, 1921), Chap. xiii. See also, *Letters*, I, 322, 324-25, and James's Preface to the New York Edition of *The Awkward Age*. For contemporary reviews, see the *Nation*, August 24, 1899, p. 155, and the *Literary World*, July 22, 1899, p. 227. James stated that by injudicious use of detail and by foreshortening he had misplaced the narrative centers of *The Tragic Muse* and *The Wings of the Dove*.

major and his wife. In "The Figure in the Carpet" (1896)¹²² and *The Sacred Fount* the author as "I" is in each case actively engaged in attempting to solve the problem posed. The relationship is slightly different in "The Next Time"; the author is partially removed from the story, for he reports the narrative of some of his acquaintance. This same relationship of the author to the story obtains in "Brooksmith" (1891).¹²³ But a third distinction in relationship occurs in "Maud-Evelyn" (1900),¹²⁴ in which James in his own right as man and author has heard a story and tells it as he has heard it, the "I" becoming the original oral narrator. This is especially effective because James needed the semblance of direct authority to make the fantasy convincing. A variant of this method is used in "The Friends of the Friends," James presenting the reader with a manuscript which had come to his hand; by this arrangement he was able, while writing the story, to escape authority for it. A further variant is employed in "The Turn of the Screw" wherein James introduces the reader to a character who in turn presents the story in manuscript form as written by a governess in the first person. The Richardsonian correspondence form is used in "A Bundle of Letters" (1880)¹²⁵ and "The Point of View." The fading of the "I" form into that of the omniscient author may be noticed in "Flickerbridge" (1903).¹²⁶ Here the first person singular is withdrawn from the story; no author is mentioned; he is entirely outside the story. Yet the sense of intimacy between the impersonal author and the characters is so close that the reader would be unaware of the intrusion of the author as "I" anywhere in the text. In summary, one must admire the technique used by James to establish his relationship to his characters and his readers.

¹²²Original publication was in *Cosmopolis*, January-February, 1896.

¹²³Original publication was in *Harper's Weekly*, May 2, 1891.

¹²⁴Original publication was in the *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1900.

¹²⁵Original publication was in the *Parisian*, December 18, 1879.

¹²⁶Original publication was in *Scribner's Magazine*, February, 1902.

4. *Center of Revelation*

The selection and development of a center of revelation is as distinguishing a characteristic of a James story as may be found in his writings. For James's purpose, as he himself explicitly explained in his prefaces to the New York Edition, was to communicate to the reader with all the "immediacy" possible as much "felt" life as he could convey. He accomplished this purpose technically through devising a center of revelation. The reader is ever arriving at a new comprehension of a life situation at the same time that it is being revealed to the center.¹²⁷ In *Roderick Hudson*, as James announced in the Preface, the center of revelation is Rowland Mallet, whose steady love of Mary is matched only by his conscientious effort to save Roderick for her, and whose increasing understanding of the nature of Roderick is the camera eye through which the reader also follows the story.

In *The American* and *The Ambassadors* the centers are the chief characters, Christopher Newman and Lambert Strether respectively. The reader, in company with Christopher, may learn that the Marquise de Bellegarde has murdered her husband and wrecked the life of her daughter, Madame de Cintré, and he may assess the covetousness, avarice, and corruption of this Continental family of title, contrasting old-world decadent morality with new-world integrity. In the latter novel, the reader undergoes with Strether an education from provinciality to cosmopolitanism. Similarly, the lovely American girl, Isabel Archer, is the center of revelation in *The Portrait of a Lady*, and through her the reader adjusts himself to the conditions of a tragic state. *The Bostonians*¹²⁸ is also singly centered.

¹²⁷ For an indispensable study of James's technique, see *The Method of Henry James*, by Joseph Warren Beach (New Haven, 1918).

¹²⁸ Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* and James's *The Bostonians* ran approximately concurrently as serials in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*. The first installment of Howells's novel began

Through the experiencing mind of Basil Ransom, the Mississippian who is James's representative in the book and who rescues Verena Tarrant from suffragettes and mesmerism, the reader is made aware of James's attitude toward feminine political militancy in the late nineteenth century. *The Golden Bowl* is not so unified. In the first volume the "seeing" center is the Princess, and in the second volume her husband, the Prince, becomes the center.

Sometimes the revealing center is multiple, or is lodged in the story itself rather than in a character. In the Preface to *The Tragic Muse* James mentioned how dismayed he was at his inability to discover a center until the title flashed through his mind.¹²⁹ Until then he could appropriately write only of Nicholas Dormer. After the title had become clear, unity seemed to him to be achieved. Nicholas could give up an assured parliamentary career for the art of painting, and lose Julia Dallow; and Miriam Rooth could achieve success on the stage, and lose Peter Sherringham, a rising diplomat. Each could then represent and reveal the power of art over those who were destined to follow it.¹³⁰ In *The Reverberator* (1888), "a little rounded drama,"¹³¹ no centrality whatever was at first apparent

three months before that of James's. For contemporary reviews of *The Bostonians* see the *Critic* for April 17, 1886, pp. 191-92, the *Nation* for May 13, 1886, pp. 407-08, the *Literary World* for June 12, 1886, p. 198, and the *Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1886, pp. 851-53.

¹²⁹ The New York Edition, Preface, VII, x-xiii.

¹³⁰ One may note, however, that the delay in phrasing the title did mar the structure. Certainly when James began writing the novel he thought of Nicholas Dormer as the center. As James progressed, Miriam Rooth took on added importance; and when the idea of the Tragic Muse came to his mind, it became necessary for James to strengthen Miriam's role. This he did, even to the point of raising her to the plane of professional success the while he held Nicholas on the level of possible permanent amateurship. After the title flashed into James's mind, the shift from Nicholas to Miriam is too noticeable.

¹³¹ The New York Edition, Preface, XIII, v.

to James; no character or point of view seemed to hold the story together. Finally the idea came to him that the action itself should in this case be the unifying medium. In this story, the germ of the idea lay in an actual anecdote: he had heard of an amateur journalist, a lady who, lacking all sensibility, had betrayed a group who had placed confidence in her. So strong was James's interest in this story, and so weak was his perception of her personality as a whole, that he had no other choice but to let the action become the center.

5. *Style*

The problems of craftsmanship which thus far have engaged this chapter have been objective matters, matters on which James consciously formulated dicta. The problem of his style has also exercised many minds, and on this subject critics have had to devise their own commentaries. For James's style is personal and in the main subjective. Without conscious effort on his part, it arose from his methods of composition and his inner urges with respect to delicate gradations of mood and meaning.

In James's earlier fiction his style is clear and precise; in his later work the sentences become more involved and his ideas are more intricately and elaborately developed. Some readers have expressed a preference for the earlier manner; others enjoy the later. Critics, noting the development, have endeavored to suggest reasons for the change.

At least two factors¹³² are chiefly responsible for the transition in style: his increasing insistence on capturing all of the values

¹³² Van Wyck Brooks is convinced that a third element largely determined the nature of James's style. It is Brooks's opinion that James reflected the characteristics of one who always lived in a tentative or foreign environment, who never established a truly native home. To this cause Brooks attributes to James the hesitant, cautious style of "an habitually embarrassed man." See Brooks's *The Pilgrimage of Henry James*, p. 131.

inherent in a situation, and his use of dictation in his later years. Both operated at the same time. On the occasion of a visit, Robert Herrick informed James that he could tell when James first began the method of dictation: in the middle of *The Princess Casamassima*, which appeared serially in the *Atlantic Monthly* from September, 1885, through October, 1886. Herrick records that James did not deny this inference, though he expressed wonder that Herrick could detect the change.¹³³ Theodora Bosanquet has explained his method.¹³⁴ He would first dictate an elaborate letter or commentary in the manner of one writing to himself and at the same time composing provisional parts of the text.¹³⁵ Later he would dictate the final draft, making many alterations, excisions, and expansions. He became so accustomed to the clicking of the keys of the typewriter that the noise was a help rather than a hindrance to his thinking as he paced from point to point in the room, slowly, hesitatingly construct-

¹³³ Robert Herrick, "A Visit to Henry James," in *The Manly Anniversary Studies in Language and Literature* (1923), pp. 229-42; for these remarks see pp. 229-30.

¹³⁴ *Henry James at Work*. The author assumed that James began dictation in the 1890's, slightly later than the date set by Herrick. See especially p. 7.

¹³⁵ Examples of working drafts are available. Dr. Edna Kenton has published about a third of James's project for *The Ambassadors*, dated September 1, 1900; see "*The Ambassadors*: Project of a Novel," in *Hound & Horn*, April-June, 1934, pp. 541-62. His outline for writing *The Ivory Tower* is in *Instigations of Ezra Pound* (New York, 1920), pp. 159-67. Before his death James had progressed through the first chapter of the fourth book; in this unfinished state it was published in Volume XXV of the New York Edition (1917), together with eighty-six pages of "Notes for *The Ivory Tower*," with comment by Percy Lubbock. *The Sense of the Past*, an unfinished novel, was also published in Volume XXVI of the same edition (1917), together with remarks by Mr. Lubbock on sixty-seven pages of notes by James under the title, "Notes for *The Sense of the Past*." James first temporarily abandoned this story in the midst of the third book. In 1915 he returned to it, and he had advanced into the fourth chapter of the fourth book before other work again stayed his hand. Illness and death soon followed.

ing his sentences. When halfway through the original dictation of a novel, he would begin to worry about its undue length and to consider how he might compress his material; and we have it on his own authority that he tended to place the story-center of his novels too far beyond the physical middle. The method of dictating experimental drafts of his novels led him to extend his remarks beyond his ability later to condense them within bounds initially set. Indeed, he wrote his short stories in longhand in an attempt to keep them within limits established by editors, though often this method did not restrain him sufficiently.

Constant working with sentences, thinking of all imaginable ways of casting them and of all the many references that might be packed into them, does not often lead to easy expression. But the process did infuse his style with the flavor of spoken rather than written English. The sentences, though involved, are unmistakably vocal in origin. The mode of expression is a compound of reticence, quiet assurance, and intimacy—the intimacy of a host of distinctive personality who is carefully developing a heretofore untold story which he is confident will interest his guests. This mode is basic in the mature style of James.

His urge to revise a work was not quieted upon its publication. Always the perfectionist, James was continually re-examining and rephrasing his writings when republication offered him opportunity. *Roderick Hudson*, which had appeared in 1876, was announced three years later in a new edition, "revised, retrenched, and in places rewritten for the English public, to whom it appears practically as a fresh work."¹³⁶ Other books, when reissued, were scrutinized. The most sweeping occasion for him to revise his works came in 1905, when his publishers determined to issue a selective edition, and he began to prepare the texts for the twenty-six volumes known in

¹³⁶ *Publishers' Weekly*, July 12, 1879, p. 31.

America as the New York Edition (1907-17). He set himself to the task of refining his works, an occupation both arduous and joyful. When he returned to *The American*, for example, he found it "consistently, consumably . . . charmingly romantic,"¹³⁷ yet in need of thorough stylistic revision, for it was going about in "a garment cheaply embroidered and unworthy of it."¹³⁸ Some of the novels he revised more than others. James wrote to Robert Herrick, for instance, that *The American* underwent more alteration than either *Roderick Hudson* or *The Portrait of a Lady*.¹³⁹ The whole work of revision required the "extremity of labor";¹⁴⁰ the earlier works especially were very "intimately and interestingly revised,"¹⁴¹ and the pages came out of the process, according to Theodora Bosanquet, looking "like so many proof-sheets of extremely corrupt text."¹⁴²

James realized little financially from this edition. The revisions necessitated resetting the type. The reward of his years of labor on revisions lay chiefly in the satisfaction which comes to a perfectionist allowed to recast his work in his later years. As late as 1915 he wrote that his "annual report of what it does—the whole 24 vols.," in Great Britain and America, amounted only to about £50. Elderly and declining in health, he continued to be the author of highly distinguished books for a limited number of readers, and he still yearned for popularity, complaining that he was "insurmountably unsaleable." Yet he looked on the edition as an "artistic problem" which he had "effectively solved" with "aesthetic light."¹⁴³

The whole force of James's strong inclination toward revising

¹³⁷ *The American*, Preface, New York Edition, II, x.

¹³⁸ *The Golden Bowl*, Preface, New York Edition, XXIII, xxi.

¹³⁹ Herrick, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

¹⁴⁰ *Letters*, II, 497.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Henry James at Work*, p. 12.

¹⁴³ Two volumes, making a total of twenty-six, were added to the edition after his death. All quotations in the paragraph are from Lubbock's edition of the *Letters*, II, 497.

he turned into fiction in "The Middle Years" (1895),¹⁴⁴ a short story which also stands as one of his supreme efforts in compression, "one of the most expensive of its sort in which I had ever engaged."¹⁴⁵ The central figure in the story is Dencombe, who, basking in the light of the bright, soft April days, is temporarily recuperating from an illness. While at a health resort he receives a copy of his latest book, *The Middle Years*. He feels certain as he scans the pages that he has written passages of enduring merit; but his sense of artistry is so strong that he begins at once scribbling alterations of text on the margins. James himself was not snatched from his process of revising, as is Dencombe, by the hand of death. But otherwise Dencombe may well represent James. Both lived in the pursuit of perfection, expressed in the story in two sentences: "Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art."

Some critics have lamented the revisions James made, holding his earlier style to be the better; Hamlin Garland¹⁴⁶ and Robert Herrick,¹⁴⁷ themselves authors who have made substantial contributions to American literature, are among this group. Herrick especially has pointed out changes and extensions which contain ridiculous involutions and distressing twists of expressions. All those who have read James's works have found obscurities, irritating repetitions of favorite words, and dialogue heavier than the sense demands. But criticism of this kind may be made of the works of most first-rate writers of fiction.

As a whole, it seems to me that James revised his works to their advantage and his glory. In exposition, compare, as a fair and typical example, the original "Émile Zola" in the *Atlantic Monthly* for August, 1903, with the later text as it appears in this

¹⁴⁴Original appearance was in *Scribner's Magazine*, May, 1893.

¹⁴⁵The New York Edition, Preface, XV, vi.

¹⁴⁶"Henry James at Rye," in *Roadside Meetings* (New York, 1930), pp. 460-64.

¹⁴⁷*Loc. cit.*

book, reprinted from *Notes on Novelists, with Some Other Notes* (1914). James added no materials or ideas; he expanded the text slightly—usually by extending final sentences in paragraphs—and throughout the later essay the changes definitely make for precision in thought, exactness in selection of words, and clarity in recording his perceptive insight. In narration, compare the novels already mentioned, or as a simpler task “The Madonna of the Future” in this collection with the original text in the *Atlantic Monthly* for March, 1873. In general, the reader will find precision and clarity better served in the later text; furthermore, the revised form occasionally reflects more the character of James and loses some of its anonymity of style.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Unless the reader makes his own comparisons by reading both texts of a complete story, he will fail to appreciate the reasons for many of the revisions. But as a partial service, I am here reprinting several passages of original text, noting the revisions by bracketing the words later deleted and supplying the revised text in italics.

From “Émile Zola,” *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1903, p. 210:

That our author was clearly great at congruous subjects—this may
conclusion

well be our [last]. If the others, subjects of the private and intimate order, gave him more or less inevitably “away,” they yet left him the great distinction that the more he could be promiscuous and collective, the more even he could [be]—to repeat my imputation

illustrate our large natural allowance of health, heartiness and grossness,
—[common],

the more he could strike us as penetrating and true.

From “The Madonna of the Future,” *Atlantic Monthly*, pp. 281, 285, and 292 respectively:

on *at first* *then saw that I*
He turned [upon] me almost angrily, [but perceiv-
was but sowing the false to reap the true
ing the genial flavor of my sarcasm, he smiled gravely].

bold sketch
I listened to this [pungent recital] in silent wonder. It
 it set the seal on
had a painfully plausible sound, [and was not inconsistent with]

For James progressed from a general or traditional idiom to a highly personal idiom that for all its individuality is not an affectation. Readers interested primarily in the basic narrative may prefer an approximation to a common idiom; those wishing to view James's world through James's mind will, I think, prefer the later texts. The mature style has a beauty of its own and springs naturally from his manner of thought, conveying in all its tones his own sense of things. It may be noted that, though James was a severe critic of his own work, he would not tolerate the objective criticism of Herrick, or of his brother William, or anyone else; and he found supreme delight in his own revised work. This arose, perhaps, from his tending to become more and more personal and stylized, and to put objectively as much

satirical,

certain shy suspicions of my own. My hostess was [a clever woman, *but was neither unvarnished nor vindictive* and presumably a generous one].

surmised *what*

Serafina, I [fancied], left part of her story untold; [but *she said sufficed* *still* she told enough of it] to make poor Theobald's own statement [seem *more affecting than I had already found its strained* intensely pathetic in its exalted] simplicity.

Professor Raymond D. Havens has indicated that in his opinion the changes of the first (1882) revision of *Roderick Hudson* "were made in the interest of greater clarity and definiteness, of euphony, and of fresher, less hackneyed phrasing" (*Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XL, 433-34, June, 1925). Earlier Miss Hélène Harvitt, comparing the first revision with the final revision, concluded that there had developed in James an "introspective, analytical trait," the effect of which "is an obscuring of spontaneous, natural passages, making them labored, heavy, ambiguous, and sometimes almost impenetrable" (*ibid.*, XXXIX, 203-27, March, 1924). James expanded radically his characterizations by adding psychological analyses. These analyses do mar the comparative simplicity of his first and second editions. But the characters in the final revision take on qualities and distinctions which will be found only in the later and best novels of James, done in the maturity of his powers.

of himself in his writings as he possibly could. Though many visual sensations lie in his prose, the content is fundamentally concerned with bringing forth fresh understanding or new emotional appreciation from new experiences. His revisions rather enhance than diminish the personal overtones.

In 1913, responding to a request from a young man seeking guidance in selecting five novels by James for study, the author made two lists. The simpler one was composed of *Roderick Hudson*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Princess Casamassima*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*; for the more advanced list James discarded the first three novels in favor of *The American*, *The Tragic Muse*, and *The Ambassadors*. In offering these selections James urged the young man to secure the "collective and revised and prefaced edition," else he "forfeits half, or much more than half, my confidence."¹⁴⁹ This amiable ban still may well apply to editors, compilers, and all lovers of good fiction.

V. THE PLAYWRIGHT: "UTTERLY OUT"

From the time James was forty-seven years of age until he was fifty-two, he was engaged in a strenuous effort to become a popular playwright. He failed utterly. But this period, from 1890 to 1895, was a time of recuperation and gestation for his greatest novels. The process of his trials in the writing of comedies was the foundation on which he raised his final narrative works to their unique place technically in literature; and the collapse of his theatrical dreams saved him for the writing of his most important fiction.

A natural interest in the theater, a decline from modest popularity, and the urge for universal acclaim led him into this

¹⁴⁹ For quotations and lists see James's letter to Mrs. G. W. Prothero, who had conveyed to James the request of the young man, Stark Young (*Letters*, II, 332-33).

bypath so disastrous to his hopes and so beneficial, finally, to his art of fiction. *Roderick Hudson* (1876), *The American* (1877), and *Daisy Miller* (1879) had brought him some recognition; controversy as to whether the debutante Daisy Miller represented the typical American girl in society and, if so, whether American manners were inferior to Continental customs, had made the name of James rather widely known. But the arc of popular interest in his works did not rise thereafter. *Washington Square* (1881) and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) did not advance his sales. *The Bostonians* (1886) was roundly criticized in the United States,¹⁵⁰ and *The Portrait of a Lady*, in which James took great pride, not only sold poorly but was considered by such a friend as Robert Louis Stevenson to be inferior to *Roderick Hudson*, in which James found many faults.¹⁵¹

In 1888 James was more than disconsolate. On January 2 he wrote to his good friend Howells that he was still "staggering" under the "injury wrought . . . upon my situation" by *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*, which had "reduced . . . the demand for my productions to zero"; even the short stories in the hands of editors were held back, and he was 'condemned apparently to eternal silence.'¹⁵² James was engaged on *The Tragic Muse* (1890) at the time, but he wrote Stevenson in July, 1888, that when it was finished he was determined "for a longish period" to abandon writing long novels,¹⁵³ and two years later, in a letter to William, he affirmed his intention: "*The Tragic Muse* is to be my last long novel."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ The editor of the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* called it the most unpopular serial the magazine ever published. William James wrote Henry that Boston society was incensed and that he himself thought it was "bad business" to caricature Miss Elizabeth Peabody as Miss Birdseye; Henry denied that he had used her as he prototype except in one external inessential (*Letters*, I, 115-17).

¹⁵¹ *Letters*, I, 132.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, I, 135.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, I, 138.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* (May 16, 1890), I, 163.

It was at this time that James nursed a wild new hope: perhaps he could recover his popularity by writing for the theater. He had long since written some dramatic criticism, and the Théâtre Français, which he had termed "the first theatre in the world"¹⁵⁵ in an early essay, had for years been his chief delight when he was in Paris. Seven years previously, in 1882, at the request of the managers of the Madison Square Theatre in New York, he had transformed *Daisy Miller*¹⁵⁶ into a play; they ultimately refused it, and James had assuaged his disappointment by publishing the dramatic version in 1883. But much literary labor since then had sharpened his abilities, and he now resolved to be a dramatist. In professional preparation he spent the winter of 1889-90 in Paris attending the theater and discussing the art of playwriting with Alphonse Daudet and Edmond de Goncourt. He then returned to London to dramatize his novel *The American*, and he finished this version before spending the spring and summer of 1890 in Italy.¹⁵⁷ Edward Compton opened the play at Southport on January 3, 1891, for its first trial performance; James trusted to its "intrinsic charms"¹⁵⁸ and reported the play favorably received.¹⁵⁹ He was so happy that he confidently thought of himself as a successful playwright. He busily set himself to work writing more plays that he might be fully prepared for the "demand" he was "certain" would be made on him for other dramas from the moment *The American*

¹⁵⁵ *The Galaxy*, April, 1877, p. 437.

¹⁵⁶ It had appeared originally in the *Cornhill Magazine*, June-July, 1878.

¹⁵⁷ For information relating to James's interest in drama see Brander Matthews, "Henry James and the Theatre," in *Playwrights on Playmaking, and Other Studies of the Stage* (New York and London, 1923); Henry James, "The Théâtre Français," in the *Galaxy*, April, 1877, or in *French Poets and Novelists*; Elizabeth Robins, ed., *Theatre and Friendship: Some Henry James Letters* (New York, 1932); Gosse, *Aspects and Impressions*.

¹⁵⁸ *Letters*, To Edmund Gosse (January 3, 1891), I, 172.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, To Mrs. Hugh Bell (January 8, 1891), I, 173-74.

attained success in London. At long last, he thought, he had discovered his "real form."¹⁶⁰

James spent the spring happily in Paris, engaged in theatrical studies, but misery was soon to catch step with him. Early in the autumn *The American* was put on the London stage. It did not go well. Casting about for such reasons as would relieve the stings of his defeat, James wrote Gosse that the play had reached the boards too early, for the city was "still empty," and that the newspapers had been "awful."¹⁶¹ But while London was filling, audiences did not increase, and the play soon closed. James, however, persisted. *Tenants, Disengaged, The Album*, and *The Reprobate* were offered for production; they were quite rightly refused, being only light comedies of lords, ladies, and upper middle-class English life, strained in plot, undistinguished in dialogue, and lacking in originality or other merit. Finally he took whatever consolation he could in allowing them to be published in two volumes, *Theatricals: Two Comedies* (1894) and *Theatricals: Second Series* (1895).

The summers of 1892 and 1894 he spent in Italy. Then came his major opportunity: Sir George Alexander accepted *Guy Domville*. Late in 1894 rehearsals began, which James watched in great trepidation. On December 31 he wrote to Miss Henrietta Reubell that he may have been meant for the drama "God knows!—but I certainly wasn't meant for the Theatre."¹⁶² The play opened five days later. Both catcalls and applause—predominantly catcalls—greeted the final curtain. The poor reception accorded the drama at the St. James's Theatre has been called the "most tragical" moment in Henry James's career.¹⁶³ He was "weary, bruised, sickened, disgusted," filled with a sense of the "vulgarity and brutality of the theatre."¹⁶⁴ At the same

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, To William James (February 6, 1891), I, 179–80.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* (October 2, 1891), I, 185.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, I, 226.

¹⁶³ Gosse, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁶⁴ *Letters*, To William James (January 9, 1895), I, 227–28.

time, across the way at the Haymarket, Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* was running a successful course. James had seen it on January 5, and thought it "feeble and vulgar."¹⁶⁵ After thirty-one performances *Guy Domville* passed into oblivion with a net income to the author of \$1,100.¹⁶⁶ James wrote to Howells that he felt himself to be "utterly out," having "utterly failed."¹⁶⁷ A few days later Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* opened on the same stage.¹⁶⁸ There was nothing for James to do but return to fiction. He still clung to the idea that he would "never again write a *long* novel; but I hope to write six immortal short ones—and some tales of the same quality."¹⁶⁹ He needed a change to recover his poise. He spent the summer of 1895 by the sea at Torquay, England. That winter he went back to London to work. The summer of 1896 was passed on the hill of Playden, and the following year he leased Lamb House, in Rye, and made it his permanent residence, though always maintaining rooms in London for frequent and extended stays in the city.

James did little work in the drama after 1895; what he did was chiefly salvage. *The Other House*, published as a novel in

¹⁶⁵ *Letters*, To William James (February 2, 1895), I, 233.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 233, 236.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* (January 22, 1895), I, 230.

¹⁶⁸ In April came the trials of Oscar Wilde, who was subjected to months of notoriety and incarceration; three years later was published "The Turn of the Screw," in part a story of irreparable harm done a young boy in a situation chosen to "reek with the air of Evil" and described by implication only: ". . . had he spoken plainly the book might have been barred from the mails." (For the first quotation, see the New York Edition, Preface, XII, xx; for the second, see Edna Kenton, quoting William Lyon Phelps, in the *Arts*, November, 1924, p. 246.) That James was conscious of having Wilde in mind may be doubted, but the subject matter of the trials and of the story suggests a possible subconscious association. Nothing could have wounded James more than having a play by Wilde supersede *Guy Domville*. See notes 105, 207, 208, and the related text, for the treatment of three definite sources.

¹⁶⁹ *Letters*, To W. D. Howells (January 22, 1895), I, 232.

1896, was converted into a three-act tragedy later, but it reached neither stage nor printer in the latter form. Its structure indicates that James conceived the story along dramatic lines—time, scenes, characters, and substance are carefully restricted, and the murder committed by Rose Armiger is properly placed for dramatic climax. Excepting possibly “The Turn of the Screw,” nothing by James is so heavy with horror. Its failure lies in the fact that the story does not attain to the conditions of true tragedy; at the close, the reader is doubtful whether Rose will unduly—even duly—suffer remorse. *Covering End*, which James wrote as a one-act play for Ellen Terry in the days of his high interest in the drama, was never staged in this form; James converted it into a tale which was published in 1898. In this story, Clement Yule finds himself in the predicament of inheriting an encumbered estate, “Covering End”; the solution of his difficulties comes when he falls in love with a rich young woman who fortunately loves him. The resolution is too mechanical to be honest literature. But the comedy was rewritten as a three-act play, newly titled *The High Bid*, and produced without success by the Forbes-Robertsons in Edinburgh in 1908 and in London in 1909.¹⁷⁰ One year later the short story “Owen Wingrave” was rewritten as a one-act play entitled *The Saloon* and produced in England. There remains but one play to record: *The Outcry*, a three-act, mechanically done light comedy which was rewritten as fiction and published in 1911; the year following James’s death the dramatic version was staged.

The unsuccessful dramatic period rendered one inestimable service to literature. It is chiefly responsible for the unique Jamesian technique of the later years. From 1895 on, he customarily sought to make his fiction “dramatic” in essence; that is, to achieve revelation coincident in time for both characters

¹⁷⁰ LeRoy Phillips, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Henry James* (New York, 1930), p. 116.

and readers. His interlude as a playwright must have given him a rest in preparation for his later fiction, because between 1895 and 1904 he produced *The Spoils of Poynton*, *What Maisie Knew*, *The Awkward Age*, *The Sacred Fount*, *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Ambassadors*, and *The Golden Bowl*, as well as four volumes of his best stories: *Embarrassments*, *The Two Magics*, *The Soft Side*, and *The Better Sort*. After 1904 came only the revisions, new collections, good shorter fiction, and two unfinished novels. It is well for the good estate of literature that James strove in the drama, that he failed, and that he returned to the writing of fiction while he yet had ten years of great vitality.

VI. PRESIDING PATTERNS OF THOUGHT

1. *Internationalism*

The two continents on which James lived and traveled offered enough of life for him to write a long shelf of books. He wrote of Americans in America and in Europe, of Englishmen in England and America and on the Continent, and of Continental characters on the Continent and in England and America. Broadly, he was in love with the accumulated arts and conventions of the Old World. Most of his life he turned from the more direct, rough, individualistic American manners. But he was not blind to the basic strength of character in American life. The similarities between the minds of James Fenimore Cooper and James are striking when one compares certain works of James with Cooper's *Homeward Bound* and *Home as Found*. Of the two, Cooper was much more intensely American, but both yearned for an American life sublimated by the virtues and strained of the vices of the Old World. James, as one of the "international" novelists, contrasted uniquely national qualities; but he employed the contrasts fundamentally in order to portray the diverse human elements in mankind. He was critical

of American manners and customs, but he was no less critical of European traits and traditions. In the latter part of his life, when visits to the United States emphasized in his mind the greatness and the variety of America and its developing culture, he sometimes wished that he had grown up with the country. He took delight in thoughts of an English-American world, though not politically united; and he was distressed at the evidences of the increasing migration to the United States of peoples who could not speak English.

In his early years, Italy, his first foreign love, richly fed his imagination.¹⁷¹ It was a land of architecture, of art galleries; it was a treasury filled with achievements of the past and with a people whose ragged clothes were transmuted into costumes by the manners and attitudes of their wearers. Yet he could not become spiritually associated with Italians, and he closed his eyes to the many evidences of economic distress in Italy. To readers of James's works, the peninsula brings immediately to mind "The Last of the Valerii" (1874), "The Madonna of the Future," many of the chapters in *Transatlantic Sketches* (1875), *Roderick Hudson*, *Daisy Miller*,¹⁷² *The Portrait of a Lady*, and *The Aspern Papers*. As a whole, they lead to the conviction that James was an American author in Italy, an American more in love with Italy than with Italians. Certainly Francis Marion Crawford was superior to James in depicting Italian characters. James used them sparingly; his interest lay rather in Americans residing in Italy. His relationship with Italian life was of the

¹⁷¹ He happily recollected his visits in Switzerland, but the mountains and valleys and the insufficiency of human associations which James found there did little to serve him. (See "Swiss Notes," in *Transatlantic Sketches*.) Certain places in Germany were positively ugly to him; he could not adjust himself to them. Munich was a "nightmare," Heidelberg a "disappointment," and Nuremberg "not a joy forever." (See "From Venice to Strasburg," in *ibid.*, p. 95.) For remarks on Italy, see the same essay.

¹⁷² Original appearance was in the *Cornhill Magazine*, June-July, 1878.

order of William Dean Howells's and Constance Fenimore Woolson's. But notwithstanding his inability to absorb Italian life with any degree of fullness, it became some part of his intellectual and emotional background.

Associations made in his youth, the Théâtre Français, the Louvre, and especially the many practicing novelists in Paris led James from Italy to France. From this life came his essays on French authors and some of the *Portraits of Places* (1883), as well as "Madame de Mauves," *The American*, *The Reverberator*, *The Tragic Muse*, and *The Ambassadors*. Again James was the American, extolling solid American values, as in "Madame de Mauves" and *The American*; or, from a background of life in England as well as in America, he was interested in recounting the influence of Parisian life on English characters in *The Tragic Muse* and on American characters in *The Ambassadors*. But there is a striking difference between James's estimation of French and of Italian values. In general, he seemed willing that Italy should not modify the nature of his English and American characters, no matter how provincial they might be; yet we may properly infer that Nick Dormer in *The Tragic Muse* and Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors* were more to James's liking after they had been modified by life in France. They attain to a measure of cosmopolitanism that James appreciated, and by absorption of certain French characteristics they became richer in experience and finer in texture than the immutably national Julia Dallow and Sarah Pocock.

The Europeans may be considered as an early practice work for *The Ambassadors*. It is a study of international differences placed in a New England setting. Mr. Wentworth is James's portrait of the New England man of ability and discipline, cold, unsmiling, honest—a man of importance in business, courteous, but too limited and severe for fullness of life. The Europeans who come to visit the Wentworth family bring with them a happy taste for living, a capacity for free enjoyment which

James found wanting in the New England environment. In *The Ambassadors*, James sent a New Englander to Europe to broaden his understanding; the novel is sublimated autobiography. As did James, so does Lambert Strether undergo a transformation. Months in England and France so widen the perspective of Strether that Woollett, Massachusetts, is never the same for him again; unlike Waymarsh, unlike Mrs. Jim Pocock, Strether becomes cosmopolitan.

James's many years in England naturally brought him a fund of material.¹⁷³ On the Continent he was not of the people; in England he felt as much at home as he could anywhere within the limits of his nature. James loved the English estates and families, but he could not abide the cheap specimens of the nobility or the snobs of rank. This seems evident in such stories as "The Siege of London," *An International Episode*, "The Abasement of the Northmores," and "The Papers." He felt, too, considerable sympathy for refined ordinary life rather than for Mayfair, as indicated in "The Birthplace" and "In the Cage." Loose marital standards in England rather bothered him, and he made careful studies of this matter in "A London Life," *What Maisie Knew*, and *The Awkward Age*. *The Golden Bowl* may also be included, though in this novel England is but the seat for aliens. But he was willing to admit redemption of one who committed folly, as in "The Chaperon," long before Eng-

¹⁷³ Fiction laid in part or entirely in England includes: "A Passionate Pilgrim," "The Siege of London," "The Author of Beltraffio," *An International Episode*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Princess Casamassima*, "A London Life," *The Tragic Muse*, "The Lesson of the Master," "Brooksmith," "Owen Wingrave," "In the Cage," "The Next Time," "The Coxon Fund," *The Spoils of Poynton*, "The Marriages," "The Turn of the Screw," "Sir Edmund Orme," "A London Life," "The Chaperon," *What Maisie Knew*, *The Awkward Age*, "Flickerbridge," "The Birthplace," "The Great Condition," "The Papers," "The Beldonald Holbein," "The Abasement of the Northmores," *The Sacred Fount*, *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Golden Bowl*, and *The Sense of the Past*.

lish society would. And throughout his life it was an abiding passion in him to retreat amid the circumstances of eighteenth-century England the while he lived in the nineteenth and twentieth, as may be noted in "A Passionate Pilgrim," *The Spoils of Poynton*, "Flickerbridge," and *The Sense of the Past*.

In letters and essays, James more directly expressed his mixed reactions toward England and English life. The tamed countryside and teeming population sometimes bothered him. The landscape of Lichfield and Warwick was so full of "nutritive suggestion" that it became "too ovine, too bovine"; and North Devon was so reduced from a state of nature that he wished for the wild stretches of his day near Boston and New York.¹⁷⁴ Drove of English people wandered about the shires during week ends, naked children nearly got underfoot, and the universal beer drinking littered the landscape with bottles.¹⁷⁵ London, for all the greatness in it which appealed to him, was clumsy and brutal and full of the "darkest sides of life."¹⁷⁶ He cared little for the unrefined commonalty. He appreciated the English social structure, with its fifty definite forms of behavior to America's one, and with the rigidly maintained stratification of classes.¹⁷⁷ Yet it should not be forgotten that he was no lover of the English lords, for he expressed in a letter to his friend W. E. Norton in 1886 a fear that the English aristocracy was undergoing a kind of decay which might be likened to that of the French at the time of the Revolution, or of the Romans when the barbarians descended.

In his fiction, James treated variously of Americans in

¹⁷⁴ See "Lichfield and Warwick," in *English Hours* (1905), p. 88, and "North Devon," in *ibid.*; both essays originally appeared in 1872.

¹⁷⁵ See "Chester" and "Warwickshire," in *English Hours* (1905); the first appeared originally in 1872, the latter in 1877.

¹⁷⁶ See "London," in *English Hours*, p. 25; the essay first appeared in 1888.

¹⁷⁷ See especially "Two Excursions," and "Warwickshire," in *English Hours*.

America, without paying special regard to American characteristics *per se*, as in *The Bostonians*, *An International Episode*, "Professor Fargo,"¹⁷⁸ *Washington Square*, "Julia Bride," "The Patagonia," "Crapy Cornelia," and "The Jolly Corner." What is to be learned? He took exception to the tendency of certain American women to delve in political and spiritualistic matters which led them far from the proper province of women's place as James conceived of it. He held, at least on occasion, that properly educated American girls, like Bessie Alden in *An International Episode*, are the equal of any in the world. He noted that the rising phenomenon of divorce, or of engagements in marriage lightly made and lightly broken, as practiced by the mother of Julia Bride and by Julia herself, had their attendant difficulties; and in "Crapy Cornelia" he signified that the New York manners of his youth were better than those of the famed New York of the twentieth century.

Further, James thought that many half-Europeanized Americans were spoiled in the process of becoming imperfectly cosmopolitan, and certain characters in his fiction are evidence of this opinion. But he treated typical Americans in Europe with greater respect; they often excel the Europeans. The contrast between Americans and Europeans is evident in "The Madonna of the Future," "Madame de Mauves," *The American*, *Daisy Miller*, *The Reverberator*, "The Pension Beaurepas," *The Portrait of a Lady*, "Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie," *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Ambassadors*, and *The Golden Bowl*. Some of the Americans are provincial, coarse, awkward, given to a display of their money, or naïve. Yet when he drew full-length portraits of his chief American characters, such as the hero of *The American* and the heroines of *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*, James supported them vigorously. He made them basically self-reliant, capable, honest, and loyal to

¹⁷⁸Original appearance was in the *Galaxy*, August, 1874. The story treats of the nineteenth-century "medicine show" and of mesmerism.

family and friends and the general course of righteousness. There are many excellent Europeans in his fiction also, but there is in some of them a certain easiness of conscience, a greediness or self-interest that allows them cruelly to harm others without compunction. James may have felt that the Continent bred too many persons like the countess in "Four Meetings" (1879),¹⁷⁹ who comes to America to command a service and an attention to which she has no right; he may have observed too many families like the Bellegardes, avaricious and given to dark deeds, and too many women like those of the De Mauves family, willing to live in a world of wives and mistresses.

During 1904-1905, too late for any major change in his fiction, a lecture tour gave James an opportunity to see New England and the Middle Atlantic States through eyes long accustomed to England, and to view superficially and for the first time the South, Middle West, and West. As he traveled through New England, in his mind contrasting it with England and realizing it was but a small part of the United States, he was newly conscious of the multiplicity, potential power, and grandeur of the land.¹⁸⁰ Passing down the seaboard, he described Boston as a pleasantly convenient city in which to live, and he seemed surprised to discover that Philadelphia was most comfortable, established, and civilized. New York still lacked charm, for the city was unformed and its social characteristics were essentially vague.¹⁸¹ Baltimore was acceptable, finished, with a society based on family units which, within reason, mingled democratically. Farther south he was distressed. There was "large, sad" Richmond, still living in the memories of an heroic but doomed age and burdened by many "ragged

¹⁷⁹ Original appearance in *Scribner's Monthly*, November, 1877.

¹⁸⁰ See, for instance, his comment on New Hampshire in a letter to Mrs. W. K. Clifford, dated September 16, 1904, in *Letters*, II, 19.

¹⁸¹ See *ibid.*, To W. E. Norris (December 15, 1904), II, 23, and to Edmund Gosse (February 16, 1905), II, 26, and *The American Scene* (1907), p. 115.

and rudimentary" Negroes intellectually unable yet to bear the responsibilities of a democracy.¹⁸² The ruins of Charleston seemed too "thin" to inspire awe,¹⁸³ while Florida's offering was limited to a divine but cloying subtropic warmth and softness.¹⁸⁴ Of the Middle West James formed no new opinion; it was still for him unbearable—"an unimagined dreariness of *ugliness*"¹⁸⁵ which he had to endure until he came to the transcendent beauties and unique qualities of southern California.¹⁸⁶

The whole tour impressed James deeply. The universal drive for physical growth and wealth was not so disguised by traditions and manners of life as in mercantile England, but the gathering strength of the nation sharpened James's hope for a certain English-American cohesiveness. It was a hope fraught with some misgivings, however, for he was astonished at the great surge of immigrants from the European continent and even Asia Minor. He heard rude Italian spoken on Boston's streets, he met an Armenian in rural New Hampshire, he saw peoples of many nations in New York and elsewhere. They were in love with America, and loyal, but James wondered whether the amalgams of the next generation would show reversion to the inherited characteristics of their ancestral, non-English-speaking countries.¹⁸⁷ James was apprehensive, too, of the English language as spoken in the United States. He was liberal in his opinions as to idiom, but he was intolerant of vulgarities, and he wished that sustaining cultural forces might dominate. The nation must not descend to the level of the proletariat.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² *The American Scene*, pp. 371, 375, 386.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 409.

¹⁸⁴ *Letters*, To Edmund Gosse (February 18, 1905), II, 26.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, To Edward Warren (March 19, 1905), II, 31.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, To Mrs. William James (April 5, 1905), II, 33.

¹⁸⁷ See *The American Scene*, especially pp. 121, 129, 231.

¹⁸⁸ See *The Question of Our Speech. The Lesson of Balzac. Two Lectures* (Boston and New York, 1905), especially p. 16.

James's "internationalism," it is evident, from a literary point of view was expressed in his desire to define cultures by contrast and comparison. From a philosophical and personal point of view it is apparent that he held progress to reside in the effectiveness of superior classes of each nationality in advancing the special talents of their respective cultures. For himself, the English-American world offered the most comforting outlook. The idea of being an "international" novelist, in the sense of considering the English and American manners as foreign to each other, was revolting to him; and he wished to write so that no one could tell whether he was English or American.¹⁸⁹ The spectacle of the United States as a melting pot of the uncultured and less fortunate classes speaking alien tongues and degrading the English speech and language militated against the traditional cultural union, a prospect which he noted with apprehension.

2. *Other Social and Political Ideas*

James was essentially a Conservative, a Federalist. He had no strong faith in the efficacy of political and social panaceas; he quietly rejected reformers in *The Bostonians* and socialism in *The Princess Casamassima*. Hope for a superior manner of life did not lie in the self-seeking masses. In an earlier age he would not have been among the Puritans, for he agreed with Nathaniel Hawthorne that they were "half-starved fanatics."¹⁹⁰ Had he lived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, he would have supported Hamiltonian stability and solidarity rather than Jacksonian frontier democracy, individualism, and disregard of tradition. He would have desired a democracy of the John Adams tradition, a democracy not rampant; and within that democracy he would have wished for a guiding aristocracy of the intellectual groups, an aristocracy unsupported by inherited immunities and offices. He

¹⁸⁹ *Letters*, To William James (October 29, 1888), I, 141-42.

¹⁹⁰ *Hawthorne*, p. 64.

had supreme faith in good breeding; human welfare was safe only so long as the conservative interest should predominate.¹⁹¹

It has been noted that James did not worry much about a world of concentrated wealth and poverty, though he mentioned most favorably the huge English poor-relief system.¹⁹² It seemed to him that private wealth came to those who, like his grandfather, wrought constructively and supplied services and goods to all sorts and conditions of men; and he observed that private wealth encouraged education, culture, the arts, and all amenities. Economic distress might or might not result in moral breakdown; there are cases in his works running either way. He often solved moral problems in his fiction under circumstances free from economic necessity. Some critics have suggested that he may have chosen this condition consciously so that he could throw a pure, clear logic on the issues, but this point of view may be doubted. It seems rather that James, in writing of moral responsibilities, often used the world with which he was familiar, a world made fairly comfortable and secure by wealth.

He knew little about labor; he did not ponder deeply on social changes. *The Princess Casamassima* is a capital example of his impotence when writing of matters sociological. With some attempt at honest sympathy as well as gentle satire he tried to write of social revolutionists in this novel—of the Englishman Paul Muniment, of Schinkel the German, and of the Frenchman Eustache Poupin, habitués of the Sun and Moon, believers in “forcible rectification” of human misery. But they do not gather clarity or force. Hyacinth Robinson, representative of both sides of the struggle, in whose veins flow the bloods of an aristocratic father and a plebeian mother, is human enough; but James is unable to let him reach a conviction or formulate

¹⁹¹ *The Question of Our Speech*, pp. 14, 45.

¹⁹² *Portraits of Places*, p. 308.

a social answer, and his suicide is the only way out for him and for James. The problem remains unsolved.

In his early maturity came the great conflict of the War between the States. It was the Civil War to him, and he gave intellectual allegiance to the Northern tenets. But he was not an Abolitionist in any degree. He agreed with Hawthorne that John Brown was justly hanged; it was wildest folly to seek a solution of a "complex political problem" by inciting a "servile insurrection."¹⁹³

As in philosophy, so also in politics, James was inclined to keep out of frays, except in occasional personal letters. In 1899, aged forty-five, while cogitating on American expansion, British imperialism, and the Dreyfus case, he characteristically said he thanked God he had no specific opinions; on the whole, the world seemed mad, and he let it proceed on its way without lifting a finger. When McKinley was elected president, James thought no evils would be rectified but he thought also that no harm would be done. Later, as has been mentioned, he expressed sympathy for Spain during the events leading to the Spanish-American War. He was by nature opposed to Theodore Roosevelt, whom he considered at one time to be a menacing jingoist, and later the "noisiest" man in history.¹⁹⁴

In the closing years of his life, his letters of 1914-15 indicate his strong belief in the culpability of the Central Powers and in the necessity of fighting against the German armies for the salvation of the Western World.

3. *Women as Characters in His Fiction*

In James's shelf of fiction, women play the major role, though their creator remained a bachelor.¹⁹⁵ His early books

¹⁹³ *Hawthorne*, p. 170.

¹⁹⁴ See *Letters*, I, 249, 310, 379; II, 25-26, 272-73.

¹⁹⁵ His cousin, Mary Temple, for whom he had a deep affection and who died in her early womanhood, was the most important feminine

treat of men, as in "A Passionate Pilgrim," *Roderick Hudson*, and *The American*. But his world became increasingly a woman's world, until his best books, such as *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Awkward Age*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*, deal chiefly with women.

Some of the women are hardly individuals; they are rather fictional characters used by James to establish a situation or spin a plot. Some are vicious in their frustration, darkly homicidal, as are Rose Armiger in *The Other House* and the Marquise de Bellegarde in *The American*; some are mentally immature weaklings, as are the mothers of Julia Bride, Nanda Brookenham, and Maisie. Some are capable girls, well able to contrive their own destinies, as are Pandora in the story to which her name gives title (1885) and hearty Millicent Henning, the store model in *The Princess Casamassima*. Some are treacherous, as are Madame Merle, Kate Croy, and Charlotte Stant. Other feminine characters are studies of types. Daisy Miller is the American girl; Mrs. Farrinder (*The Bostonians*) is the lecturer on temperance and political rights of women; and Olive Chancellor in the same novel is the "emancipator."

Young widows were always interesting characters to James, exceedingly eligible for marriage. But when age creeps up, as in "The Marriages" (1892),¹⁹⁶ Mrs. Churchley did well, in James's estimation, to recognize Colonel Chart's loyalty to his children: a widower advanced in years who is a good father may not make a good husband, nor his grown-up offspring agreeable stepchildren.

Another whole group of stories is concerned with the unat-

influence in James's life and the prototype of the heroines in *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*. Ford Madox Ford, who knew James, has written of another "attachment" which was "completely detrimental to him. Its rapture left him the person of infinite precautions that I have here rather disproportionately limned" (*Portraits from Life*, p. 19).

¹⁹⁶Originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1891.

tractive, "plain" young woman—with girls of good mind and spirit whom men pass by. The number of these stories is large enough to bring to a reader's attention James's peculiar sensitiveness to this type. Consider Grace Mavis in "The Patagonia" and Louisa Chantry in "The Visits" (1903), who in their frustration meet death; consider Fanny Knocker in "The Wheel of Time," who must marry a second choice if she marries at all, and Flora Saunt in "Glasses" (1896),¹⁹⁷ whose misfortune it is to suffer weakness of vision in the nineteenth century, when spectacles were symbols of dread elderliness, or at the least, facial disfigurements hiding the beauty of feminine eyes.¹⁹⁸ Consider, too, the widow Mrs. Dundene in "The Special Type" (1903), and especially Catherine Sloper in *Washington Square*, to whom James devoted a book to tell of her unhappy fate.

As a bachelor, James's knowledge of marital life was uninformed by the deeper understandings incident to experience. A husband's and father's relationships he did not know, nor did he usually think of women as bearers of infants or instructors of the young. His fiction is not uxorial, and his treatment of children is that of an unmarried uncle. Afternoon teas and drawing rooms were not adequate instructional environments for him. But from a speculative point of view he did write a great deal about unfaithfulness, fidelity to marriage vows, and divorce. He stood, early in his career as an author, for Madame de Mauves against her double-standard husband; he implied that happiness lies in the healthy instincts of Laura, repudiating the infidelity discolored the married life of her sister and brother-in-law in "A London Life." He fashioned Mrs. Wix to save Maisie from the contamination of the successive marital

¹⁹⁷ Original publication was in the *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1896.

¹⁹⁸ The "plain" woman triumphs in "The Beldonald Holbein" (1903), but the triumph is not in love and the plot is touched with comic irony. The story appeared originally in *Harper's Magazine*, October, 1901.

and extra-marital entanglements of her parents, who in their maturity of years remain, like Mrs. Brookenham in *The Awkward Age*, fundamentally immature and unstable. In fact, Nanda Brookenham, the daughter, is not unlike Laura, and rationally handles Mitchy and Vandermark. James looked on divorce with the eyes of his period. He had no good thing to say for the marriages and divorces of Julia Bride's mother, or for Julia's light-hearted flitting in and out of a half-dozen engagements. But he could not treat the subject with the sound comprehension that informs William Dean Howells's *A Modern Instance*. The presiding idea which James held is illustrated in the conduct of Isabel Archer, who refuses to leave her husband amid circumstances which Howells would certainly have carried to court to free her from such a man as Osmond; the theme is repeated with variation in the long, involved, careful considerations of Maggie in *The Golden Bowl* on the possibilities of saving her sinking marital ship.

Six women in three of James's best novels—*The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*—are elaborately developed symbols of two of James's most characteristic and persistent themes, faithfulness and treachery. Isabel Archer, Milly Theale, and Maggie Verver, all of whom James drew in the image of his cousin, Mary Temple, represent faithfulness, goodness, loveliness, and sensitiveness. Each of these women, wholly innocent and pure of heart and purpose, is shamefully betrayed by a friend of long standing. All three of the betrayers—Madame Merle, Kate Croy, and Charlotte Stant—have long been in love with the men who become the husbands of their friends, and in each case financial limitations had prevented marriage. Their situation and their treachery are nearly identical. None of the three reveals to her wealthy and trusting friend the fact of her love of the man, and both Madame Merle and Kate Croy actively urge the marriage of their lovers to their wealthy friends in the hope of attaining

financial security. Neither Madame Merle nor Kate Croy yields her lover after his marriage to another; Charlotte Stant is at first more honorable, though only by force of circumstance, and later carries on a liaison with her married lover, the prince, even when she herself has become the wife of a man of wealth.

When one considers that these three of James's masterpieces are built on the structure of trust and deceit, with corresponding characters, it is evident that in them will be found many of the author's basic thoughts. These novels, as well as others, raise problems of renunciation to achieve a higher good, of the law of retribution, of qualities of mercy, of the relationship or identity of morality and beauty, of free will, of sin, of fate undeserved, and kindred matters which are undertaken in the next section.

4. *Philosophical Dicta and Implications*

When he was twenty-three years of age, James wrote a review of *The Works of Epictetus*, the Greek Stoic philosopher.¹⁹⁹ At this time James termed Stoicism "the most absolute and uncompromising system of morals ever accepted," teaching the supremacy of the human will over all physical vicissitudes. Its strength lay, according to James, in rendering life endurable in a pre-Christian world of tyranny and servitude; its weakness was its willingness to accept the despot's heel, which Christianity, asserting the sanctity of the individual, would not do.²⁰⁰ What drew forth James's admiration for Stoicism was its assumption of freedom of the will, a doctrine clearly evident in much of his fiction.

At the age of forty, James still in emergency summoned Stoicism. In a letter of condolence to Miss Grace Norton, he

¹⁹⁹ Occasioned by the appearance of Thomas Wentworth Higginson's translation (1866), based on that of Elizabeth Carter's. For reprint of review, see *Notes and Reviews by Henry James*.

²⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 176-81.

could offer only the way of the Stoic. He confessed he did not know the source or purpose of life; there was only the conviction that "we are all echoes and reverberations of the same."²⁰¹ A year later he confessed to his brother William that he could not grant their father's theological premises, or conceive of heavens or hells, though he enjoyed the spirit of religion.²⁰²

As he grew elderly, James read his brother William's works more carefully. Hitherto he had been only mildly interested in philosophical systems; he had paid slight, if any, attention to his contemporary, Herbert Spencer, and he had let his father and brother go their ways. But in 1907 and again in 1909 he wrote William that the latter's *Pragmatism* impressed him strongly and was the most intellectually satisfying, co-ordinated system of thought he knew.²⁰³ In the letters James made no specific comments, however, on the general thesis of pragmatism that the reason for thinking was to establish serviceable, practical principles of conduct.

It must be remembered that James was in no true sense a student save in his study of the art of fiction of his own period. The names of philosophers, poets, and scientists seldom appear in his pages; the past, save as a retreat from the present, was for him but mildly interesting.²⁰⁴ Contemporaneity was in him a most distinguishing quality. Religion or churches play no real part in his fiction save as on rarest occasion they offer re-

²⁰¹ *Letters*, I, 100-01; the letter is dated from Boston, July 28, 1883.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, I, 111-12; occasioned by Henry's receiving from William a copy of *The Literary Remains of the Late Henry James*.

²⁰³ See *ibid.*, II, 83, 141; the letters were written at Rye, October 17, 1907, and October 31, 1909.

²⁰⁴ The review of the works of Epictetus and an occasional "Introduction," written at the solicitation of publishers, only emphasize this characteristic. Examples are the introductions for Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* in the Century Classics (1900) and for the edition of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* annotated by Sidney Lee and published in New York by George D. Sproul (1907).

treat from the world. When he wrote of the cathedrals of Chartres and Rouen, he noted their architectural beauty; unlike Henry Adams, for instance, he did not deeply think of them as symbols rising from religious motivations. His ethical ecstasy was reserved for literature. Yet he respected the church as did the Englishmen of his day. He observed that they all attended services regularly, for the sake of decency and propriety; and that although they attached no "positive sense" to the formulas they repeated, the church as an institution was a deep, sound, unifying, ethical force in English life.²⁰⁵

In the realm of ethics, James's intensely moral qualities are established both in his critical essays and in his fiction. The essays, as the chapter on "The Critic" has recorded, specifically illustrate his disgust for sordid or licentious materials not used for noble purposes in fiction, as well as his insistence that great literature and true beauty cannot arise from vulgarity of spirit or in the absence of good taste. In other chapters, frequent comment has been made on certain moral implications star-scattered in James's fiction, but something more perhaps should be said regarding certain presiding ideas.

It is plain that James believed that innocence may be contaminated by a disreputable environment: it was a matter of time and degree. In so far as this is so, he placed limitations on his general thesis of responsibility of the individual through free play of the will. Certainly *Julia Bride* is unfortunately affected by the pattern of her mother. Though *Maisie* probably escapes without permanent harm from amidst many liaisons of her elders, she is saved by being removed from the scene before it is too late. In "The Turn of the Screw" young Miles, reared amidst all-consuming depravity, is overcome.

"The Turn of the Screw" implies the influence of environment and the contagion of depravity, and also suggests that sin may spring from psychopathic disorders. Notwithstanding the fact

²⁰⁵ *Portraits of Places*, pp. 185-86.

that James attached no great importance to this story, he included it in the New York Edition, and it is worth an extension of remarks.

Hitherto reference has been made to the "germ" of the story as James recalled it. One day in 1895 Edward White Benson, archbishop of Canterbury, recounted to James a ghost story concerning two children "to whom," James wrote in the Preface to the tale, "the spirits of certain 'bad' servants . . . were believed to have appeared with the design of 'getting hold' of them." But this is only one of several sources.

From the regions of spiritual debasement the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel hover over the lives of Miles and his sister as evil incarnate, permeating "The Turn of the Screw" with a terrible sense of eroticism. Young Miles, whose innocent, helpless life Quint has sadly perverted, was almost certainly consciously or unconsciously developed by James from an earlier character, Morgan Moreen, of "The Pupil" (1892).²⁰⁶ For Morgan is given instruction by a good young man, even as Miles is later tutored by a governess. Surrounded by some strange miasma of evil, it is the fate of Morgan to die in the arms of his tutor, even as Miles dies in the arms of the governess.

Further, Robert Lee Wolff has offered much evidence to show that for scenic background James subconsciously used T. Griffiths's picture, "The Haunted House," representing a boy, a girl, a haunted house with its tower, and a lake. This picture appeared in 1891, in *Black and White*, and James later vaguely recalled its being in the same issue with his own "Sir Edmund Orme," another ghost story.

Through Mrs. Grose's hints to the governess, the reader is assured that both Quint and Miss Jessel have been evil influences in a former time. In her words, he had been "too free" and was

²⁰⁶Originally published in *Longman's Magazine*, March-April, 1891.

possessed "to play with him [Miles], I mean—to spoil him."²⁰⁷ Miles guardedly confides to the governess that he had been irrevocably dismissed from school without stated cause, not for lying or stealing, but for saying things to those whom he liked, who, Miles believes, "must have repeated them. To those *they* liked" At the close of the story the contamination of the past, rising in the ghost of Quint, kills the boy as he lies in the arms of the governess, the final turn of the screw.

It has been suggested that the story is capable of a double interpretation and that there is "another mystery behind the ostensible one," in which the governess is a sex-starved neurotic, the whole story baseless in fact and only an hallucination of her mind, and she herself the murderer of Miles.²⁰⁸ The arguments advanced seem hardly tenable. The similarity between Morgan Moreen and Miles has already been mentioned. It is true that the governess tells the story from her point of view alone, and that she is the only one who sees the ghost of Quint. But it is dangerous to infer that James consciously did this in order that the story might be a figment of her imagination. It seems more probable that James merely used the governess as the center of revelation, not as the center of the story as well as the center of revelation. In "The Turn of the Screw" it would seem that the

²⁰⁷ The whole wretched matter has been critically treated by William Lyon Phelps: ". . . had he [James] spoken plainly the book might have been barred from the mails; yet it is a great work of art, profoundly ethical, and making to all those who are interested in the moral welfare of girls and boys an appeal terrific in its intensity." Quoted by Edna Kenton, in "Henry James to the Ruminant Reader: *The Turn of the Screw*," in the *Arts*, November, 1924, pp. 245-55; quotation on p. 246.

If the nature of the eroticism may be interpreted specifically, as Dr. Phelps and others have intimated, and if one wished to find a possible subconscious source for this sin, one may recall James's intense dislike of Wilde; see note 168.

²⁰⁸ See Edmund Wilson, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," *Hound & Horn*, April-June, 1934, pp. 385-406, an essay which has been extended in his *Triple Thinkers*. See also Edna Kenton, *op. cit.*

center of the story is the Quint-Miles relationship. Finally, the Preface to the New York Edition indicates that the idea of making the governess sex-starved never entered James's mind. In it he wrote of ghosts as entities, while his only worry over the governess was that he might not get her to *convey* the aura of dreadful in the story: that he might fail in making her an effective center of revelation.²⁰⁹ In his Prefaces, James's instinct was to reveal his techniques to his readers, not to conceal them.

There are numerous other philosophical attitudes lying imbedded in James's works, not in any related philosophical order, but, as in life, inseparably related to the course of action or circumstance. He had faith in the rightness of the robust, inquisitive, active life motivated by the urge to press on to new learning and experience. He admired these qualities in James Russell Lowell; in *The Bostonians* Verena Tarrant is rescued from her unnatural, inhibited course; in *The Ambassadors* Strether is a symbol of expanding understanding; and in *The Wings of the Dove* Milly Theale passionately seeks health and fullness of life. Sin, as the opposite of rightness of heart, is often rationalized as degeneration of personality engendered by incompetence and frustration. The treacheries of Roderick Hudson, Rose Armiger in *The Other House*, Madame Merle in *The Portrait of a Lady*, Kate Croy in *The Wings of the Dove*,

²⁰⁹ This does not imply that James did not write of maladjustments of sex (note "A London Life," "The Chaperon," and *What Maisie Knew*), or of sex frustration (note "The Patagonia," *Washington Square*, and *The Other House*), but simply that the evidence of neuroticism in the governess is weak in "The Turn of the Screw." The problem of ghosts and sex starvation is likewise tenuous. The bereaved lover in "Maud-Evelyn" fulfills in his mind a span of married life actually denied him by the death of his betrothed; the old maids in "The Third Person" are glad to receive a hearty ghost from their family tree; Edmund Orme had been defeated in love during his lifetime, and his ghost rises to prevent the same catastrophe from happening to another living suitor. Save in "Maud-Evelyn," James's ghosts seem real.

and Charlotte Stant in *The Golden Bowl* arise from incompetence or the frustration of normal life patterns. They are quite in contrast to wholesome characters like Christopher Newman in *The American*, Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady*, Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl*, and Milly Theale, who have the strength to surmount their difficulties and who achieve victory over their fates by maintaining personal integration and a kindly, pure spirit.

It is in these strong characters that James best illustrates freedom of choice,²¹⁰ as well as the identity of truth, goodness, and beauty. Only the strong have the full power to choose wisely between two goods, to discard things of price for the priceless things, to conquer the self-weakening force of blind hate and to show their strength by showing mercy. For to a considerable extent, at least, James's weak characters are distressingly weak of will, suggesting little ability to exercise choice, and the truly psychopathic characters live in a world nearly if not quite beyond their powers of decision.

In general, the law of compensation is operative in James's work, though he did recognize the true tragedy of blind fate in the world. Many of his characters illustrate the law of retribution, and they suffer penalties no statute can impose and no human spirit escape. Among them are Rose Armiger the murderess, deceitful Merton Densher and Kate Croy, the violator of the financial trust in "A Round of Visits" (1910),²¹¹ the fiercely possessive wife of the author of *Beltraffio*, the faithless husband of Madame de Mauves, and the designing Morris Townsend in *Washington Square*. These characters stand in contrast to those who, like Isabel Archer and the hero of "The Altar of the Dead," attain salvation by choosing the path of virtue. The tragedy of inoperative compensation, of good

²¹⁰ Professor Harry Hayden Clark has noted over forty references to freedom of choice in *The Portrait of a Lady*.

²¹¹ Original appearance was in the *English Review*, April-May, 1910.

people who, like Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles, suffer loss through pure fate of circumstance, is illustrated in the lives of such characters as Catherine Sloper, Brooksmith, Herbert Dodd in "The Bench of Desolation," Grace Mavis in "The Patagonia," and several of James's "plain" young women.

Related rather to the psychology of James than to his philosophy is his sense of the past. It was a sense in no way like that of the passion of the historian. James often wished to retreat from the present, from realities. His feeling of powerlessness, noted by his brother William, and his sensitiveness and shyness were characteristic, almost abnormal; and his sense of the past nearly became an obsession. The past was for him a refuge. This psychological manifestation had its penalties; but it produced, first and last, the inimitable "A Passionate Pilgrim" and *The Sense of the Past*, and a number of stories between these two in time. The purest example of escape is probably "The Great Good Place," wherein the spirit, amid monastic surroundings, almost attains for a time the peace of nirvana. "The Altar of the Dead" is close to "The Great Good Place" in skirting the rim of psychic retreat; George Stransom, beginning to live in the past, recovers memory upon memory as he withdraws from the present, quite in contrast to the normal course of life, which opens new experience upon new experience, and is always, like Paul Creston in the same story, breasting the future.²¹²

The final impression of James's philosophy of art may fairly arise from stories already mentioned. As he indicated in "The Lesson of the Master," literary art is a jealous mistress, demanding complete discipline. Himself a constructive critic, he described in "The Figure in the Carpet" the urge that leads one

²¹² Readers will recall that retreat is also a theme in "Flickerbridge," "The Jolly Corner," and "Crapy Cornelia." The use of the past for other and varying purposes is to be noted in "Maud-Evelyn," "The Third Person," "Sir Edmund Orme," and "The Turn of the Screw."

to search eternally for the "exquisite scheme" of an author. It was impossible, James knew, for some men of high talent to write fiction that would attract the allegiance of millions of people; this he discussed in "The Next Time." And in "The Middle Years" he drew a portrait of himself as revisionist and perfectionist. These are all autobiographical in the sense that they are sublimated self-portraits, revealing the characteristics of James's condition, method, and state of mind. Though art is jealous and demanding, its attainment is adequate compensation; Nicholas Dormer, in *The Tragic Muse*, must sacrifice Julia Dallow and a seat in Parliament if he is to be true to art, but to yield these things is not hard for one whose sole business is art.²¹³ James reserved himself unto the end wholly for his art.

The funeral service at Chelsea Old Church was a fitting termination of James's earthly course, a course which had been responsive to the conviction that good taste, goodness, beauty, and truth are one, that all life has relationship in a common unity, that the fate of worldly affairs as well as of art rests in the hands of the exceptionally gifted, and that responsible institutions of age and dignity serve noble purposes. The simple service was perfectly suited to James's nature; and among those who paid the final gesture of respect were Ambassador Walter Hines Page, Lord Bryce, Lord Morley, Lord Curzon, John Sargent, and Rudyard Kipling. He could rest serene in the knowledge that he had left behind, *carefully revised*, a shelf of books for an ardent circle of readers who enjoy being his guest while he entertains them with his unique powers.

²¹³Two stories deal unimportantly with literary life. "The Death of the Lion" (1895) is a rather biting story concerning the sad fate of Neal Parady, whose misfortune it is to be adored by feminine admirers to such an extent that he has no time to himself. "The Coxon Fund" (1895) likewise treats of the relationship of a writer to a well-to-do, adoring public. The first story was published originally in the *Yellow Book* for April, 1894; the second appeared in the same journal for July, 1894.

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE AND SELECTED
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS
OF HENRY JAMES

The chronology is inserted with the selected bibliography for the purpose of offering the reader a clearer perception of whatever associations exist between Henry James's life and works. The selected bibliography contains the original books by the author. For his prefaces, introductions, unpublished dramatic works, and contributions to books and periodicals, as well as for elaborate bibliographical notes on the original appearance of his works in magazines, and on translations of his works, see the distinguished and invaluable work by LeRoy Phillips, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Henry James*. New York: Coward, McCann, 1930.

1843. April 15, born at 2 Washington Place, New York City.

Early years of training under governesses and tutors.

1855-1858. Europe: travels and studies with family—Geneva, London, Paris (principally), Boulogne-sur-Mer.

1858. America: moves with family to Newport.

1859-1860. Europe: spends winter studying in Geneva, summer studying in Bonn.

1860-1862. America: resides in Newport; becomes interested in art, and in works of Balzac and Mérimée.

1862-1864. Attends Harvard Law School with no definite aim save an interest in matters literary; makes acquaintance of William Dean Howells and Charles Eliot Norton; family settles in Boston in 1864.

1864-1869. Writes many reviews and some stories, which appear in the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *North American Review*, the *Nation*, and the *Galaxy*; develops critical appreciation of current English, French, and American works. Moves with family to Cambridge, Mass., in 1866.

- 1869-1870. Europe: early in 1869 visits England; reaches Switzerland in May; spends summer and fall in Switzerland and northern Italy, arriving in Rome in November; thence to Naples and Paris; sails from England for America in April, 1870.
- 1870-1872. In Cambridge writing sketches, reviews, and fiction, including "A Passionate Pilgrim" (*Atlantic Monthly*, March-April, 1871) and "Watch and Ward" (*Atlantic Monthly*, August-December, 1871).
- 1872-1874. Europe: England, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, France; writes "Transatlantic Sketches" for the *Nation* and some reviews and stories; with James Russell Lowell in Paris, especially interested in the productions of the Théâtre Français. Returns to Cambridge, Mass., in the autumn of 1874.
- 1874-1875. In Cambridge, Mass., and New York City. *A Passionate Pilgrim, and Other Tales*. Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1875.
Transatlantic Sketches. Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1875.
- 1875-1876. Leaves America in the autumn to reside permanently in Europe; spends a year in Paris enjoying associations with important novelists, including Ivan Turgenev, Guy de Maupassant, Gustave Flaubert, Alphonse Daudet, and Émile Zola.
- 1876-1877. Establishes permanent residence in London during middle of the winter.
Roderick Hudson. Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1876. (*Atlantic Monthly*, January-December, 1875.)
1877. Visits Paris in the autumn and Rome in the winter; returns to London. This is the first of his customary yearly vacations on the Continent.
The American. Boston: James R. Osgood and Co. (*Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1876-May, 1877.)
1878. Visits in Scotland for a time.
Watch and Ward. Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Co. (*Atlantic Monthly*, August-December, 1871.)

- French Poets and Novelists.* London: Macmillan and Co.
The Europeans: A Sketch. London: Macmillan and Co.
 2 vols. (*Atlantic Monthly*, July–October, 1878.)
1879. Notes that he had “dined out” in London 107 times the past winter; spends spring in Italy and three months during the autumn in Paris.
- Daisy Miller: A Study.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879 [1878]. (*Cornhill Magazine*, June–July, 1878.)
- An International Episode.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879 [1878]. (*Cornhill Magazine*, December, 1878–January, 1879.)
- Daisy Miller: A Study; An International Episode, Four Meetings.* 2 vols. London: Macmillan and Co.
- Hawthorne.* London: Macmillan and Co.
- The Madonna of the Future and Other Tales.* 2 vols. London: Macmillan and Co. (These volumes contain “The Madonna of the Future,” “Longstaff’s Marriage,” “Madame de Mauves,” “Eugene Pickering,” “The Diary of a Man of Fifty,” “Benvolio.”)
1880. Visits Italy two months in the spring; by autumn he feels himself to be in spirit “a thoroughly naturalized Londoner.”
- The Diary of a Man of Fifty and A Bundle of Letters.* New York: Harper & Brothers.
- A Bundle of Letters.* Boston: Loring.
- Confidence.* Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Co.; also London: Chatto and Windus. (*Scribner’s Monthly*, August, 1879–January, 1880.)
1881. In Venice during the spring and early summer; spends winter of 1881–82 in America.
- Washington Square.* New York: Harper & Brothers. 1881 [1880]. (*Cornhill Magazine*, June–November, 1880; *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, July–December, 1880.)
- Washington Square, The Pension Beaurepas, A Bundle of Letters.* 2 vols. London: Macmillan and Co.
- The Portrait of a Lady.* 3 vols. London: Macmillan

- and Co. (*Macmillan's Magazine*, October, 1880–November, 1881; *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1880–December, 1881.)
1882. Mother dies in February; James sails for England in May; summer is spent in England; visits in France during the autumn; his father dying, James returns to America in December.
- The Portrait of a Lady*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co. 1882 [1881].
1883. Remains in America until August, when he returns to London; does not visit America again for twenty years.
- Foreign Parts*. In *Collection of British Authors*. Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz.
- Daisy Miller: A Study—And Other Stories*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- The Siege of London, The Pension Beaurepas, and The Point of View*. Boston: James R. Osgood and Co.
- Portraits of Places*. London: Macmillan and Co.
- Daisy Miller: A Comedy*. In Three Acts. Boston: James R. Osgood and Co.
- Collection of Novels and Tales by Henry James*. 14 vols. London: Macmillan and Co.
1884. Early in the year he spends several weeks in Paris; returns to London.
- The Siege of London, The Point of View, A Passionate Pilgrim*. Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz.
- Tales of Three Cities*. Boston: James R. Osgood and Co.; also London: Macmillan and Co.
1885. Makes friendly acquaintance of Robert Louis Stevenson; in Paris for a month in the autumn; returns to London.
- A Little Tour in France*. Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1885 [1884]. (*Atlantic Monthly*, as "En Provence," July–November, 1883, and February, April, and May, 1884.)
- Stories Revived*. 3 vols. Vol. I: "The Author of Beltraffio," "Pandora," "The Path of Duty," "A Day of Days," "A Light Man." Vol. II: "Georgina's

Reasons," "A Passionate Pilgrim," "A Landscape-Painter," "Rose-Agathe." Vol. III: "Poor Richard," "The Last of the Valerii," "Master Eustace," "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," "A Most Extraordinary Case." London: Macmillan and Co.

The Author of Beltraffio, Pandora, Georgina's Reasons, The Path of Duty, Four Meetings. Boston: James R. Osgood and Co.

The Art of Fiction, by Walter Besant and Henry James. Boston: Cupples, Upham & Co.

1886. Changes London residence from Bolton Street to the more pleasant flat at 34 De Vere Gardens, Kensington.

The Bostonians: A Novel. 3 vols. London: Macmillan and Co. (*Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, February, 1885–February, 1886.)

The Princess Casamassima: A Novel. 3 vols. London and New York: Macmillan and Co. (*Atlantic Monthly*, September, 1885–October, 1886.)

1887. Visits Italy for several months, staying mainly in Florence and Venice; returns to London in late summer.

1888. Spends part of summer in Torquay; tours Switzerland, France, and northern Italy in the autumn; returns to London; James is deeply distressed because his novels are not popular; he decides to write no more long novels after his present manuscript, *The Tragic Muse*, is completed.

Partial Portraits. London and New York: Macmillan and Co.

The Aspern Papers, Louisa Pallant, The Modern Warning. 2 vols. London and New York: Macmillan and Co. (*The Aspern Papers* was originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March–May, 1888.)

The Reverberator. 2 vols. London and New York: Macmillan and Co. (*Macmillan's Magazine*, February–July, 1888.)

1889. Visits Paris in the autumn; determines to try to increase his income and win popularity by writing plays.

- A London Life, The Patagonia, The Liar, Mrs. Temperley.* 2 vols. London and New York: Macmillan and Co. (*A London Life* had originally appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*, June–September, 1888.)
1890. Spends summer in Italy.
The Tragic Muse. 2 vols. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co. (*Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1889–May, 1890); also 3 vols. London and New York: Macmillan and Co.
1891. A dramatized version of *The American* was produced in Southport in January, and in London in the autumn of the same year. James visits Paris in early spring; he goes to Dresden, Germany, at the close of 1891, called by the death of the American, Wolcott Balestier.
1892. Sister Alice dies in England in March; James spends summer in Italy; joins brother William and his family in Switzerland on his return trip.
The Lesson of the Master, The Marriages, The Pupil, Brooksmith, The Solution, Sir Edmund Orme. New York and London: Macmillan and Co.
Daisy Miller & An International Episode. New York: Harper & Brothers.
1893. Engages in theatrical interests in London; visits Paris and Switzerland.
The Private Life, Lord Beaupré, The Visits. New York: Harper & Brothers.
The Wheel of Time, Collaboration, Owen Wingrave. New York: Harper & Brothers.
The Private Life, The Wheel of Time, Lord Beaupré, The Visits, Collaboration, Owen Wingrave. London: James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co.
The Real Thing and Other Tales. New York and London: Macmillan and Co. (This volume contains "The Real Thing," "Sir Dominick Ferrand," "Nona Vincent," "The Chaperon," "Greville Fane.")
Picture and Text. New York: Harper & Brothers.
Essays in London and Elsewhere. New York: Harper &

Brothers; also London: James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co.

1894. James is in London; continues theatrical interests.
Theatricals: Two Comedies. Tenants, Disengaged. London: Osgood, McIlvaine & Co.
1895. *Guy Domville*, a drama, is produced in London in January; but is a failure; James spends summer in Torquay, returns to London; publishes dramas which producers would not stage.
Theatricals: Second Series. The Album, The Reprobate. London: Osgood, McIlvaine & Co.
Terminations: The Death of the Lion, The Coxon Fund, The Middle Years, The Altar of the Dead. New York: Harper & Brothers; also London: William Heinemann.
1896. Spends the summer and autumn in the region of Playden and Rye, Sussex; returns to London.
Embarrassments. New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co.; also London: William Heinemann. (This volume contains "The Figure in the Carpet," "Glasses," "The Next Time," "The Way It Came.")
The Other House. New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co.; also London: William Heinemann.
1897. Establishes his home at Lamb House, Rye, Sussex, which becomes his permanent residence for the rest of his life; he maintains a room in London, however, and frequently is in London for a few weeks at a time; his habit of dictating stories and novels is by now confirmed.
The Spoils of Poynton. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co. 1897 [1896]; also London: William Heinemann. (Originally titled "The Old Things," *Atlantic Monthly*, April–October, 1896.)
What Maisie Knew. Chicago and New York: Herbert S. Stone & Co.; also London: William Heinemann.

- mann, 1898. (*Chap-Book*, January 15–August 1, 1897; *New Review*, February–July, 1897.)
1898. *The Two Magics: The Turn of the Screw, Covering End*. New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co.; also London: William Heinemann. ("The Turn of the Screw" appeared originally in *Collier's Weekly*, February 5–April 16, 1898.)
In the Cage. Chicago and New York: Herbert S. Stone & Co.; also London: Duckworth and Co.
1899. Spends summer in Italy; in the autumn, his brother William and his wife come for a two years' tour of Europe, and during this period the brothers spend intermittent periods in London and at Lamb House; James has resumed the writing of long novels, since his adventures in the drama were unsuccessful.
The Awkward Age: A Novel. New York and London: Harper & Brothers; also London: William Heinemann. (*Harper's Weekly*, October 1, 1898–January 7, 1899.)
1900. Works steadily at Lamb House, with only short visits to London (Reform Club lodging) to break his literary engagements; this continues for three years.
The Soft Side. New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co.; also London: Methuen & Co. (This volume contains "The Great Good Place," "Europe," "Paste," "The Real Right Thing," "The Great Condition," "The Tree of Knowledge," "The Abasement of the Northmores," "The Given Case," "John Delavoy," "The Third Person," "Maud-Evelyn," "Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie.")
1901. *The Sacred Fount*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: Methuen & Co.
1902. *The Wings of the Dove*. 2 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co.
1903. *William Wetmore Story and His Friends, From Letters, Diaries, and Recollections*. 2 vols. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons.

- The Better Sort.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: Methuen & Co. (This volume contains "Broken Wings," "The Beldonald Holbein," "The Two Faces," "The Tone of Time," "The Special Type," "Mrs. Medwin," "Flickerbridge," "The Story in It," "The Beast in the Jungle," "The Birthplace," "The Papers.")
- The Ambassadors: A Novel.* New York and London: Harper & Brothers; also London: Methuen & Co. (*North American Review*, January–December, 1903.)
1904. Sails for America at the end of August, to remain for ten months, making Cambridge his headquarters.
- The Golden Bowl.* 2 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: Methuen & Co. [1905].
1905. Tours the United States, visiting from New England to Florida, and thence westward, reaching California in April, returns to Lamb House, Rye, in August and begins a three-year task of revising his works thoroughly for the selective, collective New York Edition; explanatory and critical prefaces are being added.
- The Question of Our Speech. The Lesson of Balzac.* Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co.
- English Hours.* Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co.; also London: William Heinemann.
1906. At work at Rye, revising his works; takes a short vacation in London.
1907. At Rye, still revising his works for the New York Edition; goes to Paris for three months during the spring, and visits Italy for the last time; returns to Lamb House in the summer.
- The American Scene.* New York and London: Harper & Brothers.
- The Novels and Tales of Henry James. The New York Edition.* 26 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons [1907–1917].
1908. Resumes theatrical ambitions; *Covering End*, having been extended to three acts and retitled *The High Bid*,

is produced in Edinburgh in March, and in London in February of the following year; still occupied revising his works for the New York Edition.

Views and Reviews. Introduction by LeRoy Phillips. Boston: The Ball Publishing Co.

1909. Becomes seriously ill near the end of the year.

Julia Bride. New York and London: Harper & Brothers. (*Harper's Monthly Magazine*, March–April, 1908.)

Italian Hours. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.; also London: William Heinemann.

1910. Ill and unable to work; with brother William, he makes a trip to Germany; they sail for America in August, and move to New Hampshire, where William dies; Henry returns to the family in Cambridge, Mass.

The Finer Grain. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: Methuen & Co.

1911. Returns to Lamb House in the autumn; receives honorary degree at Harvard; attains fair health.

The Outcry. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: Methuen & Co.

1912. Becomes seriously ill in the autumn; moves from Lamb House to Chelsea; receives honorary Doctor of Letters degree at Oxford.

1913. April 15 is his seventieth birthday; friends secure his consent to have portrait painted by John S. Sargent.

A Small Boy and Others. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: Macmillan and Co.

1914. Begins writing *The Ivory Tower* at Chelsea; leaves Chelsea for Lamb House in July.

Notes on Novelists, with Some Other Notes. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; London: J. M. Dent & Sons.

Notes of a Son and Brother. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: Macmillan and Co.

1915. On July 26, James becomes a naturalized British subject, firmly convinced of the justice of the Allied cause in the Great War.

England at War: An Essay. The Question of the Mind.

- London: The Central Committee for National Patriotic Organization.
- Uniform Edition of the Tales of Henry James.* 14 vols. London: Martin Secker [1915-1919].
1916. Dies, February 28, at Chelsea.
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1917. *The Ivory Tower.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: W. Collins Sons & Co.
The Sense of the Past. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: W. Collins Sons & Co.
The Middle Years. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: W. Collins Sons & Co.
1918. *Within the Rim and Other Essays, 1914-15.* London: W. Collins Sons & Co.
Gabrielle de Bergerac. New York: Boni and Liveright. (*Atlantic Monthly*, July-September, 1869.)
1919. *A Landscape Painter.* New York: Scott and Seltzer.
Travelling Companions. New York: Boni and Liveright.
1920. *Master Eustace.* New York: Thomas Seltzer.
The Letters of Henry James. Selected and edited by Percy Lubbock. 2 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; also London: Macmillan and Co.
1921. *Notes and Reviews.* Preface by Pierre de Chaignon la Rose. Cambridge, Mass.: Dunster House.
The Novels and Stories of Henry James. New and Complete Edition. 35 vols. London: Macmillan and Co. [1921-1923].
1923. "*A Most Unholy Trade.*" London: The Scarab Press.
1926. *Three Letters from Henry James to Joseph Conrad.* London: Crown Press.
1928. *The Letters of Henry James to Walter Berry.* Paris: The Black Sun Press.
1932. *Theatre and Friendship: Some Henry James Letters*, ed., Elizabeth Robins. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
1934. *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James.* Introduction by Richard P. Blackmur. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.



Selections from
HENRY JAMES



I. CRITICAL ESSAYS

MR. WALT WHITMAN*

[A Review of Walt Whitman's *Drum-Taps* (1865)]

It has been a melancholy task to read this book; and it is a still more melancholy one to write about it. Perhaps since the day of Mr. Tupper's *Philosophy* there has been no more difficult reading of the poetic sort. It exhibits the effort of an essentially prosaic mind to lift itself, by a prolonged muscular strain, into poetry. Like hundreds of other good patriots, during the last four years, Mr. Walt Whitman has imagined that a certain amount of violent sympathy with the great deeds and sufferings of our soldiers, and of admiration for our national energy, together with a ready command of picturesque language, are sufficient inspiration for a poet. If this were the case, we had been a nation of poets.

The constant developments of the war moved us continually to strong feeling and to strong expression of it. But in those cases in which these expressions were written out and printed with all due regard to prosody, they failed to make poetry, as anyone may see by consulting now in cold blood the back volumes of the *Rebellion Record*. *Of course* the city of Manhattan, as Mr. Whitman delights to call it, when regiments poured through it in the first months of the war, and its own sole god, to borrow the words of a real poet, ceased for a while to be the millionaire, was a noble spectacle, and a poetical statement to this effect is possible. *Of course* the tumult of a battle is grand, the results of a battle tragic, and the untimely deaths of young men a theme for elegies. But he is not a poet who merely reiterates these plain facts *ore rotundo*. He only sings them worthily who views them from a height. Every tragic event collects about it a number of persons who delight to dwell

*From the *Nation*, November 16, 1865.

upon its superficial points—of minds which are bullied by the *accidents* of the affair. The temper of such minds seems to us to be the reverse of the poetic temper; for the poet, although he incidentally masters, grasps, and uses the superficial traits of his theme, is really a poet only in so far as he extracts its latent meaning and holds it up to common eyes.

And yet from such minds most of our war verses have come, and Mr. Whitman's utterances, much as the assertion may surprise his friends, are in this respect no exception to general fashion. They are an exception, however, in that they openly pretend to be something better; and this it is that makes them melancholy reading. Mr. Whitman is very fond of blowing his own trumpet, and he has made very explicit claims for his book. "Shut not your doors," he exclaims at the outset—

Shut not your doors to me, proud libraries,
For that which was lacking among you all, yet needed most, I
bring;
A book I have made for your dear sake, O soldiers,
And for you, O soul of man, and you, love of comrades;
The words of my book nothing, the life of it everything;
A book separate, not link'd with the rest, nor felt by the in-
tellect;
But you will feel every word, O Libertad! arm'd Libertad!
It shall pass by the intellect to swim the sea, the air,
With joy with you, O soul of man.

These are great pretensions, but it seems to us that the following are even greater:

From Paumanok starting, I fly like a bird,
Around and around to soar, to sing the idea of all;
To the north betaking myself, to sing there arctic songs,
To Kanada, 'til I absorb Kanada in myself—to Michigan then,
To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their songs (they are
inimitable);
Then to Ohio and Indiana, to sing theirs—to Missouri and
Kansas and Arkansas to sing theirs,
To Tennessee and Kentucky—to the Carolinas and Georgia,
to sing theirs,

To Texas, and so along up toward California, to roam accepted everywhere;

To sing first (to the tap of the war-drum, if need be)

The idea of all—of the western world, one and inseparable,

And then the song of each member of these States.

Mr. Whitman's primary purpose is to celebrate the greatness of our armies; his secondary purpose is to celebrate the greatness of the city of New York. He pursues these objects through a hundred pages of matter which remind us irresistibly of the story of the college professor who, on a venturesome youth's bringing him a theme done in blank verse, reminded him that it was not customary in writing prose to begin each line with a capital. The frequent capitals are the only marks of verse in Mr. Whitman's writings. There is, fortunately, but one attempt at rhyme. We say fortunately, for if the inequality of Mr. Whitman's lines were self-registering, as it would be in the case of an anticipated syllable at their close, the effect would be painful in the extreme. As the case stands, each line stands off by itself, in resolute independence of its companions, without a visible goal.

But if Mr. Whitman does not write verse, he does not write ordinary prose. The reader has seen that liberty is "libertad." In like manner, comrade is "camerado"; Americans are "Americanos"; a pavement is a "trottoir," and Mr. Whitman himself is a "chansonnier." If there is one thing that Mr. Whitman is not, it is this, for Béranger was a *chansonnier*. To appreciate the force of our conjunction, the reader should compare his military lyrics with Mr. Whitman's declamations. Our author's novelty, however, is not in his words, but in the form of his writing. As we have said, it begins for all the world like verse and turns out to be arrant prose. It is more like Mr. Tupper's proverbs than anything we have met. But what if, in form, it is prose? it may be asked. Very good poetry has come out of prose before this. To this we would reply that it must first have gone into it. Prose, in order to be good poetry, must first be good prose. As a general principle, we know of no circumstance more likely to impugn a writer's earnestness than

the adoption of an anomalous style. He must have something very original to say if none of the old vehicles will carry his thoughts. Of course he *may* be surprisingly original. Still, presumption is against him. If on examination the matter of his discourse proves very valuable, it justifies, or at any rate excuses, his literary innovation.

But if, on the other hand, it is of a common quality, with nothing new about it but its manners, the public will judge the writer harshly. The most that can be said of Mr. Whitman's vaticinations is, that, cast in a fluent and familiar manner, the average substance of them might escape unchallenged. But we have seen that Mr. Whitman prides himself especially on the substance—the life—of his poetry. It may be rough, it may be grim, it may be clumsy—such we take to be the author's argument—but it is sincere, it is sublime, it appeals to the soul of man, it is the voice of a people. He tells us, in the lines quoted, that the words of his book are nothing. To our perception they are everything, and very little at that. A great deal of verse that is nothing but words has, during the war, been sympathetically sighed over and cut out of newspaper corners, because it has possessed a certain simple melody. But Mr. Whitman's verse, we are confident, would have failed even of this triumph, for the simple reason that no triumph, however small, is won but through the exercise of art, and that this volume is an offense against art. It is not enough to be grim and rough and careless; common sense is also necessary, for it is by common sense that we are judged.

There exists in even the commonest minds, in literary matters, a certain precise instinct of conservatism, which is very shrewd in detecting wanton eccentricities. To this instinct Mr. Whitman's attitude seems monstrous. It is monstrous because it pretends to persuade the soul while it slights the intellect; because it pretends to gratify the feelings while it outrages the taste. The point is that it does this *on theory*, willfully, consciously, arrogantly. It is the little nursery game of "open your mouth and shut your eyes." Our hearts are often touched through a compromise with the artistic sense, but never in

direct violation of it. Mr. Whitman sits down at the outset and counts out the intelligence. This were indeed a wise precaution on his part if the intelligence were only submissive! But when she is deliberately insulted, she takes her revenge by simply standing erect and open-eyed. This is assuredly the best she can do. And if she could find a voice she would probably address Mr. Whitman as follows:

"You came to woo my sister, the human soul. Instead of giving me a kick as you approach, you should either greet me courteously, or, at least, steal in unobserved. But now you have me on your hands. Your chances are poor. What the human heart desires above all is sincerity, and you do not appear to me sincere. For a lover you talk entirely too much about yourself. In one place you threaten to absorb Kanada. In another you call upon the city of New York to incarnate you, as you have incarnated it. In another you inform us that neither youth pertains to you nor 'delicatesse,' that you are awkward in the parlor, that you do not dance, and that you have neither bearing, beauty, knowledge, nor fortune. In another place, by an allusion to your 'little songs,' you seem to identify yourself with the third person of the Trinity. For a poet who claims to sing 'the idea of all,' this is tolerably egotistical.

"We look in vain, however, through your book for a single idea. We find nothing but flashy imitations of ideas. We find a medley of extravagances and commonplaces. We find art, measure, grace, sense sneered at on every page, and nothing positive given us in their stead. To be positive one must have something to say; to be positive requires reason, labor, and art; and art requires, above all things, a suppression of oneself, a subordination of oneself to an idea. This will never do for you, whose plan is to adapt the scheme of the universe to your own limitations. You cannot entertain and exhibit ideas; but, as we have seen, you are prepared to incarnate them. It is for this reason, doubtless, that when once you have planted yourself squarely before the public, and in view of the great service you have done to the ideal, have become, as you say,

'accepted everywhere,' you can afford to deal exclusively in words. What would be bald nonsense and dreary platitudes in anyone else becomes sublimity in you.

"But all this is a mistake. To become adopted as a national poet, it is not enough to discard everything in particular and to accept everything in general, to amass crudity upon crudity, to discharge the undigested contents of your blotting-book into the lap of the public. You must respect the public which you address; for it has taste, if you have not. It delights in the grand, the heroic, and the masculine; but it delights to see these conceptions cast into worthy form. It is indifferent to brute sublimity. It will never do for you to thrust your hands into your pockets and cry out that, as the research of form is an intolerable bore, the shortest and most economical way for the public to embrace its idols—for the nation to realize its genius—is in your own person.

"This democratic, liberty-loving, American populace, this stern and war-tried people, is a great civilizer. It is devoted to refinement. If it has sustained a monstrous war, and practiced human nature's best in so many ways for the last five years, it is not to put up with spurious poetry afterwards. To sing aright our battles and our glories it is not enough to have served in a hospital (however praiseworthy the task in itself), to be aggressively careless, inelegant, and ignorant, and to be constantly preoccupied with yourself. It is not enough to be rude, lugubrious, and grim. You must also be serious. You must forget yourself in your ideas. Your personal qualities—the vigor of your temperament, the manly independence of your nature, the tenderness of your heart—these facts are impertinent. You must be *possessed*, and you must strive to possess your possession. If in your striving you break into divine eloquence, then you are a poet. If the idea which possesses you is the idea of your country's greatness, then you are a national poet; and not otherwise."

IVAN TURGENEV *

[A Review of *Frühlingsfluthen. Ein König Lear des Dorfes. Zwei Novellen.* Von Iwan Turgéniew. Mitau. 1873.]

We know of several excellent critics who to the question Who is the first novelist of the day? would reply, without hesitation, Ivan Turgenev. Comparisons are odious, and we propose to make none that shall seem merely invidious. We quote our friends' verdict as a motive for this brief record of our own impressions. These, too, are in the highest degree favorable; and yet we wish, not to impose a conclusion, but to help well-disposed readers to a larger enjoyment. To many such Turgenev is already vaguely known as an eminent Russian novelist. Twelve years ago he was little more than a name, even in France, where he perhaps now finds his most sympathetic readers. But all his tales, we believe without exception, have now been translated into French—several by the author himself; an excellent German version of the best is being published under his own supervision, and several very fair English versions have appeared in England and America. He enjoys what is called a European reputation, and it is constantly spreading. The Russians, among whom fiction flourishes vigorously, consider him their greatest artist. His tales are not numerous, and many of them are very short. He gives one the impression of writing much more for love than for lucre. He is particularly a favorite with people of cultivated taste; and nothing, in our opinion, cultivates the taste more than to read him.

I

He belongs to the limited class of very careful writers. It is to be admitted at the outset that he is a zealous genius, rather than an abundant one. His line is narrow observation. He has not the faculty of rapid, passionate, almost reckless improvisation—that of Walter Scott, of Dickens, of George Sand. This is an immense charm in a storyteller; on the whole, to our sense,

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the greatest. Turgenev lacks it; he charms us in other ways. To describe him in the fewest terms, he is a storyteller who has taken notes. This must have been a lifelong habit. His tales are a magazine of small facts, of anecdotes, of descriptive traits, taken, as the phrase is, *sur le vif*. If we are not mistaken, he notes down an idiosyncrasy of character, a fragment of talk, an attitude, a feature, a gesture, and keeps it, if need be, for twenty years, till just the moment for using it comes, just the spot for placing it. "Stachov spoke French tolerably, and as he led a quiet sort of life passed for a philosopher. Even as an ensign, he was fond of disputing warmly whether, for instance, a man in his life might visit every point of the globe, or whether he might learn what goes on at the bottom of the sea, and was always of the opinion that it was impossible." The writer of this description may sometimes be erratic, but he is never vague. He has a passion for distinctness, for bringing his characterization to a point, for giving you an example of his meaning. He often, indeed, strikes us as loving details for their own sake, as a bibliomaniac loves the books he never reads. His figures are all portraits; they have each something special, something peculiar, something that none of their neighbors have, and that rescues them from the limbo of the gracefully general. We remember, in one of his stories, a gentleman who makes a momentary appearance as host at a dinner party and, after being described as having such and such a face, clothes, and manners, has our impression of his personality completed by the statement that the soup at his table was filled with little paste figures, representing hearts, triangles, and trumpets. In the author's conception, there is a secret affinity between the character of this worthy man and the contortions of his vermicelli. This habit of specializing people by vivid oddities was the gulf over which Dickens danced the tightrope with such agility. But Dickens, as we say, was an improviser; the practice for him was a kind of lawless revel of the imagination. Turgenev, on the other hand, always proceeds by book. What could be more minutely appreciative, and at the same time less like Dickens, than the following portrait?

People in St. Petersburg still remember the Princess R——. She appeared there from time to time at the period of which we speak. Her husband was a well-bred man, but rather stupid, and she had no children. The Princess used to start suddenly on long journeys, and then return suddenly to Russia. Her conduct in all things was very strange. She was called light, and a coquette. She used to give herself up with ardor to all the pleasures of society: dance till she dropped with exhaustion, joke and laugh with the young men she received before dinner in her darkening drawing room, and pass her nights praying and weeping, without finding a moment's rest. She often remained till morning in her room stretching her arms in anguish; or else she remained bowed, pale and cold, over the leaves of a hymnbook. Day came, and she was transformed again into an elegant creature, paid visits, laughed, chattered, rushed to meet everything that could give her the smallest diversion. She was admirably shaped. Her hair, the color of gold, and as heavy as gold, formed a tress which fell below her knees. And yet she was not spoken of as a beauty; she had nothing fine in her face except her eyes. This even, perhaps, is saying too much, for her eyes were gray and rather small; but their deep keen gaze, careless to audacity, and dreamy to desolation, was equally enigmatical and charming. Something extraordinary was reflected in them, even when the most futile speeches were passing from her lips. Her toilets were always too striking.

These lines seem to carry a kind of historical weight. It is the Princess R——, and no one else. We feel as if the author could show us documents and relics; as if he had her portrait, a dozen letters, some of her old trinkets. Or take the following few lines from the admirable tale called *The Wayside Inn*:

He belonged to the burgher class, and his name was Nahum Ivanov. He had a thick short body, broad shoulders, a big round head, long waving hair, already grizzled, though he was not yet forty. His face was full and fresh-colored; his forehead low and white. His little eyes, of a clear blue, had a strange look, at once oblique and impudent. He kept his head always bent, his neck being too short; he walked fast, and never let his hands swing, keeping them always closed. When he smiled,

and he smiled often, but without laughing, and as if by stealth, his red lips parted disagreeably, showing a row of very white, very close teeth. He spoke quickly, with a snarling tone.

When fiction is written in this fashion, we believe as we read. The same vividly definite element is found in the author's treatment of landscape: "The weather continued to stand at set-fair; little rounded white clouds moved through the air at a great height, and looked at themselves in the water; the reeds were stirred by movements and murmurs produced by no wind; the pond, looking in certain places like polished steel, absorbed the splendid sunshine." There is an even greater reality, because it is touched with the fantastic, without being perverted by it, in this brief sketch of the Pontine Marshes, from the beautiful little story of *Visions*:

The cloud before my eyes divided itself. I became aware of a limitless plain beneath me. Already, from the warm soft air which fanned my cheeks, I had observed that I was no longer in Russia. This plain, moreover, was not like our Russian plains. It was an immense dusky level, overgrown, apparently, with no grass, and perfectly desolate. Here and there, over the whole expanse, glittered pools of standing water, like little fragments of looking glass. In the distance, the silent, motionless sea was vaguely visible. In the intervals of the broad, beautiful clouds glittered great stars. A murmur, thousand-voiced, unceasing, and yet not loud, resounded from every spot; and strangely rang this penetrating, drowsy murmur, this nightly voice of the desert. . . . "The Pontine Marshes," said Ellis. "Do you hear the frogs? Do you recognize the smell of sulphur?"

This is a cold manner, many readers will say, and certainly it has a cold side; but when the character is one over which the author's imagination really kindles, it is an admirable vehicle for touching effects. Few stories leave on the mind a more richly poetic impression than *Hélène*; all the tenderness of our credulity goes forth to the heroine. Yet this exquisite image of idealized devotion swims before the author's vision in no misty

moonlight of romance; she is as solidly fair as a Greek statue; his dominant desire has been to understand her, and he retails small facts about her appearance and habits with the impartiality of a judicial, or even a medical, summing up. The same may be said of his treatment of all his heroines, and said in evidence of the refinement of his art; for if there are no heroines we see more distinctly, there are none we love more ardently. It would be difficult to point, in the blooming fields of fiction, to a group of young girls more radiant with maidenly charm than M. Turgenev's Hélène, his Lisa, his Katia, his Tatiana, and his Gemma. For the truth is that, taken as a whole, he regains on another side what he loses by his apparent want of joyous invention. If his manner is that of a searching realist, his temper is that of a devoutly attentive observer, and the result of this temper is to make him take a view of the great spectacle of human life more general, more impartial, more unreservedly intelligent, than that of any novelist we know. Even on this line he proceeds with his characteristic precision of method; one thinks of him as having divided his subject matter into categories, and as moving from one to the other—with none of the magniloquent pretensions of Balzac, indeed, to be the great showman of the human comedy—but with a deeply intellectual impulse toward universal appreciation. He seems to us to care for more things in life, to be solicited on more sides, than any novelist save George Eliot. Walter Scott cares for adventure and bravery and honor and ballad figures, and the humor of Scotch peasants; Dickens cares, on an immense, far-reaching scale, for picturesqueness; George Sand cares for love and botany. But these writers care also, greatly, and indeed almost supremely, for their fable, for its twists and turns and surprises, for the work they have in hand of amusing the reader. Even George Eliot, who cares for so many other things beside, has a weakness for making a rounded plot, and often swells out her tales with mechanical episodes, in the midst of which their moral unity quite evaporates. The Bulstrode-Raffles episode in *Middlemarch*, and the whole fable of *Felix Holt*, are striking cases in point. M. Turgenev lacks, as regards form, as we have said, this immense charm of absorbed

inventiveness; but in the way of substance there is literally almost nothing he does not care for. Every class of society, every type of character, every degree of fortune, every phase of manners, passes through his hands; his imagination claims its property equally, in town and country, among rich and poor, among wise people and idiots, dilettanti and peasants, the tragic and the joyous, the probable and the grotesque. He has an eye for all our passions, and a deeply sympathetic sense of the wonderful complexity of our souls. He relates in *Mumu* the history of a deaf-and-dumb serf and a lap dog, and he portrays in *A Strange Story* an extraordinary case of religious fanaticism. He has a passion for shifting his point of view, but his object is constantly the same,—that of finding an incident, a person, a situation, *morally* interesting. This is his great merit, and the underlying harmony of the mosaic fashion in which he works. He believes in the intrinsic value of “subject” in art; he holds that there are trivial subjects and serious ones, that the latter are much the best, and that their superiority resides in their giving us absolutely a greater amount of information about the human mind. Deep into the mind he is always attempting to look, though he often applies his eye at very dusky apertures. There is perhaps no better evidence of his minutely psychological attitude than the considerable part played in his tales by simpletons and weak-minded persons. There are few novelists who have not been charmed by the quaintness and picturesqueness of mental invalids; but M. Turgenev is attracted by something more—by the opportunity of watching the machinery of character, as it were, through a broken windowpane. One might collect from his various tales a perfect regiment of incapables, of the stragglers on life’s march. Almost always, in the background of his groups of well-to-do persons, there lurks some grotesque, underwitted poor relation, who seems to hover about as a vague memento, in his scheme, of the instability both of fortune and of human cleverness. Such, for instance, is Uvar Ivanovitsch, who figures as a kind of inarticulate chorus in the tragedy of *Hélène*. He sits about, looking very wise and opening and closing his fingers, and in his person, in this attitude,

the drama capriciously takes leave of us. Perhaps the most moving of all the author's tales—moving, not in the sense that it makes us shed easy tears, but as reminding us vividly of the solidarity, as we may say, of all human weakness—has for its hero a person made imbecile by suffering. The admirable little tale of *The Brigadier* can only be spoiled by an attempt to retail it; we warmly recommend it to the reader, in the French version. Never did Romance stoop over a lowlier case of moral decomposition, but never did she gather more of the perfume of human truth. To a person able to read but one of M. Turgenev's tales, we should perhaps offer this one as a supreme example of his peculiar power; for here the artist, as well as the analyst, is at his best. All rigid critical formulas are more or less unjust, and it is not a complete description of our author—it would be a complete description of no real master of fiction—to say that he is simply a searching observer. M. Turgenev's imagination is always lending a hand and doing work on its own account. Some of this work is exquisite; nothing could have more of the simple magic of picturesqueness than such tales as *The Dog*, *The Jew*, *Visions*, *The Adventure of Lieutenant Jergounov*, *Three Meetings*, a dozen episodes in *The Memoirs of a Sportsman*. Imagination guides his hand and modulates his touch, and makes the artist worthy of the observer. In a word, he is universally sensitive. In susceptibility to the sensuous impressions of life—to colors and odors and forms, and the myriad ineffable refinements and enticements of beauty—he equals, and even surpasses, the most accomplished representatives of the French school of storytelling; and yet he has, on the other hand, an apprehension of man's religious impulses, of the *ascetic* passion, the capacity of becoming dead to colors and odors and beauty, never dreamed of in the philosophy of Balzac and Flaubert, Octave Feuillet and Gustave Droz. He gives us Lisa in *A Nest of Noblemen*, and Madame Polosov in *Spring-Torrents*. This marks his range. Let us add, in conclusion, that his merit of form is of the first order. He is remarkable for concision; few of his novels occupy the whole of a moderate volume, and some of his best performances are tales of thirty pages.

II

M. Turgenev's themes are all Russian; here and there the scene of a tale is laid in another country, but the actors are genuine Muscovites. It is the Russian type of human nature that he depicts; this perplexes, fascinates, inspires him. His works savor strongly of his native soil, like those of all great novelists, and give one who has read them all a strange sense of having had a prolonged experience of Russia. We seem to have traveled there in dreams, to have dwelt there in another state of being. M. Turgenev gives us a peculiar sense of being out of harmony with his native land—of his having what one may call a poet's quarrel with it. He loves the old, and he is unable to see where the new is drifting. American readers will peculiarly appreciate this state of mind; if they had a native novelist of a large pattern, it would probably be, in a degree, his own. Our author *feels* the Russian character intensely, and cherishes, in fancy, all its old manifestations—the unemancipated peasants, the ignorant, absolute, half-barbarous proprietors, the quaint provincial society, the local types and customs of every kind. But Russian society, like our own, is in process of formation, the Russian character is in solution, in a sea of change, and the modified, modernized Russian, with his old limitations and his new pretensions, is not, to an imagination fond of caressing the old fixed contours, an especially grateful phenomenon. A satirist at all points, as we shall have occasion to say, M. Turgenev is particularly unsparing of the new intellectual fashions prevailing among his countrymen. The express purpose of one of his novels, *Fathers and Sons*, is to contrast them with the old; and in most of his recent works, notably *Smoke*, they have been embodied in various grotesque figures.

It was not, however, in satire, but in thoroughly genial, poetical portraiture, that our author first made his mark. *The Memoirs of a Sportsman* was published in 1852, and was considered, says one of the two French translators of the work, much the same sort of contribution to the question of Russian serfdom as Mrs. Stowe's famous novel to that of American

slavery. This, perhaps, is forcing a point, for M. Turgenev's group of tales strikes us much less as a passionate *pièce de circonstance* than as a disinterested work of art. But circumstances helped it, of course, and it made a great impression—an impression which testifies to no small culture on the part of Russian readers. For never, surely, was a work with a polemic bearing more consistently low in tone, as painters say. The author treats us to such a scanty dose of flagrant horrors that the moral of the book is obvious only to attentive readers. No single episode pleads conclusively against the "peculiar institution" of Russia; the lesson is in the cumulative testimony of a multitude of fine touches—in an aftersense of sadness which sets wise readers thinking. It would be difficult to name a work which contains better instruction for those heated spirits who are fond of taking sides on the question of "art for art." It offers a capital example of moral meaning giving a sense to form, and form giving relief to moral meaning. Indeed, all the author's characteristic merits are to be found in the *Memoirs*, with a certain amateurish looseness of texture which will charm many persons who find his later works too frugal, as it were, in shape. Of all his productions, this is indeed the most purely delightful. We especially recommend the little history of Foma, the forest keeper, who, one rainy night, when the narrator has taken refuge in his hut, hears a peasant stealing fagots in the dark, dripping woods, rushes forth and falls upon him, drags the poor wretch home, flings him into a corner, and sits on in the smoky hovel (with the author, whom we perceive there, noting, feeling, measuring it all), while the rain batters the roof, and the drenched starveling howls and whines and imprecates. Anything more dismally real in a narrower compass we have never read,—anything more pathetic, with less of the machinery of pathos. In this case, as at every turn with M. Turgenev, "It is life itself," we murmur as we read, "and not this or that or the other storyteller's more or less clever 'arrangement' of life." M. Turgenev deserves this praise in its largest application; for "life" in his pages is very far from meaning a dreary liability to sordid accidents, as it seems to mean with those writers of the grimly

pathetic school who cultivate sympathy to the detriment of comprehension. He does equal justice—joyous justice—to all brighter accidents—to everything in experience which helps to keep it within the pale of legend. Two of the sportsman's reminiscences are inexpressibly charming,—the chapter in which he spends a warm summer night lying on the grass listening to the small boys who are sent out to watch the horses at pasture, as they sit chattering to each other of hobgoblins and fairies; and the truly beautiful description of a singing match in a village alehouse, between two ragged serfs. The latter is simply a perfect poem. Very different, but in its way as characteristic, is the story of *A Russian Hamlet*—a poor gentleman whom the sportsman, staying overnight at a fine house where he has been dining, finds assigned to him as roommate, and who, lying in bed and staring at him grotesquely over the clothes, relates his lugubrious history. This sketch, more than its companions, strikes the deep moral note which was to reverberate through the author's novels.

The story of *Rudin*, which followed soon after, is perhaps the most striking example of his preference for a theme which takes its starting point in character—if need be, in morbid character. We have had no recent opportunity to refresh our memory of the tale, but we have not forgotten the fine quality of its interest—its air of psychological truth, unencumbered with the usual psychological apparatus. The theme is one which would mean little enough to a coarse imagination—the exhibition of a character peculiarly unrounded, unmolded, unfinished, inapt for the regular romantic attitudes. Dmitri Rudin is a moral failure, like many of the author's heroes—one of those fatally complex natures who cost their friends so many pleasures and pains; who might, and yet, evidently, might not, do great things; natures strong in impulse, in talk, in responsive emotion, but weak in will, in action, in the power to feel and do singly. Madame Sand's *Horace* is a broad, free study of this type of person, always so interesting to imaginative and so intolerable to rational people; M. Turgenev's hero is an elaborate miniature-portrait. Without reading *Rudin* we should not know just how

fine a point he can give to his pencil. But M. Turgenev, with his incisive psychology, like Madame Sand, with her expansive synthesis, might often be a vain demonstrator and a very dull novelist if he were not so constantly careful to be a dramatist. Everything, with him, takes the dramatic form; he is apparently unable to conceive of anything out of it, he has no recognition of unembodied ideas; an idea, with him, is such and such an individual, with such and such a nose and chin, such and such a hat and waistcoat, bearing the same relation to it as the look of a printed word does to its meaning. Abstract possibilities immediately become, to his vision, concrete situations, as elaborately defined and localized as an interior by Meissonier. In this way, as we read, we are always looking and listening; and we seem, indeed, at moments, for want of a running thread of explanation, to see rather more than we understand.

It is, however, in *Hélène* that the author's closely commingled realism and idealism have obtained their greatest triumph. The tale is at once a homely chronicle and a miniature epic. The scene, the figures, are as present to us as if we saw them ordered and moving on a lamp-lit stage; and yet, as we recall it, the drama seems all pervaded and colored by the light of the moral world. There are many things in *Hélène*, and it is difficult to speak of them in order. It is both so simple and so various, it proceeds with such an earnest tread to its dark termination, and yet it entertains and beguiles us so unceasingly as it goes, that we lose sight of its simple beauty in its confounding, entrancing reality. But we prize it, as we prize all the very best things, according to our meditative aftersense of it. Then we see its lovely unity, melting its brilliant parts into a single harmonious tone. The story is all in the portrait of the heroine, who is a heroine in the literal sense of the word; a young girl of a will so calmly ardent and intense that she needs nothing but opportunity to become one of the figures about whom admiring legend clusters. She is a really elevated conception; and if, as we shall complain, there is bitterness in M. Turgenev's imagination, there is certainly sweetness as well. It is striking that most of his flights of fancy are in his conceptions of women. With them only,

occasionally, does he wholly forswear his irony, and become frankly sympathetic. We hope it is not false ethnology to suppose that this is a sign of something, potentially at least, very fine in the character of his countrywomen. As fine a poet as you will would hardly have devised a Maria Alexandrovna (in *A Correspondence*), an Hélène, a Lisa, a Tatiana, an Irene even, without having known some very admirable women. These ladies have a marked family likeness, an exquisite something in common which we may perhaps best designate as an absence of frivolous passion. They are addicted to none of those *chatteries* which French romancers consider the "adorable" thing in women. The baleful beauty, in *Smoke*, who robs Tatiana of her lover, acts in obedience to an impulse deeper than vulgar coquetry. And yet these fair Muscovites have a spontaneity, an independence, quite akin to the English ideal of maiden loveliness. Directly, superficially, they only half please. They puzzle us almost too much to charm, and we fully measure their beauty only when they are called upon to act. Then the author imagines them doing the most touching, the most inspiring things.

Hélène's loveliness is all in unswerving action. She passes before us toward her mysterious end with the swift, keen movement of a feathered arrow. She finds her opportunity, as we have called it, in her sympathy with a young Bulgarian patriot, who dreams of rescuing his country from Turkish tyranny; and she surrenders herself to his love and his project with an *abandon* which loses none of its poetry in M. Turgenev's treatment. She is a supreme example of his taste for "original" young ladies. She would certainly be pronounced *queer* in most quiet circles. She has, indeed, a fascinating oddity of outline; and we never lose a vague sense that the author is presenting her to us with a charmed expectancy of his own, as a traveled friend would show us some quaintly feathered bird, brought from beyond the seas, but whose note he had not yet heard. To appreciate Hélène's oddity, you must read of the orthodoxy of the people who surround her. All about the central episode the story fades away into illimitable irony, as if the author wished to prove that,

compared with the deadly seriousness of Hélène and Inssarov, everything else is indeed a mere playing at life. We move among the minor episodes in a kind of atmosphere of sarcasm: now kindly, as where Bersenev and Schubin are dealt with; now unsparingly comical, as in the case of her foolish parents and their tardy bewilderment—that of loquacious domestic fowls who find themselves responsible for the hatching of an eagle. The whole story is charged with lurking meanings, and to retail them would be as elaborate a task as picking threads out of a piece of fine tapestry. What is Mademoiselle Zoe, for instance, the little German *dame de compagnie*, but a humorous sidelight upon Hélène's intensity—Mademoiselle Zoe, with the pretty shoulders, and her presence in the universe a sort of mere general rustle of muslin, accompanied, perhaps, by a faint toilet perfume? There is nothing finer in all Turgenev than the whole matter of Bersenev's and Schubin's relation to Hélène. They, too, in their vivid reality, have a symbolic value, as they stand watching the woman they equally love whirled away from them in a current swifter than any force of their own. Schubin, the young sculptor, with his moods and his theories, his exaltations and depressions, his endless talk and his disjointed action, is a deeply ingenious image of the artistic temperament. Yet, after all, he strikes the practical middle key, and solves the problem of life by the definite application of what he *can*. Bersenev, though a less fanciful, is, perhaps, at bottom, a still more poetical figure. He is condemned to inaction, not by his intellectual fastidiousness, but by a conscious, intelligent, intellectual mediocrity, by the dogged loyalty of his judgment. There is something in his history more touching than even in that of Hélène and Inssarov. These two, and Schubin as well, have their consolations. If they are born to suffering, they are born also to rapture. They stand at the open door of passion, and they can sometimes forget. But poor Bersenev, wherever he turns, meets conscience with uplifted finger, saying to him that though Homer may sometimes nod, the sane man never misreasons, and the wise man assents to no mood that is not a working mood. He has not even the satisfaction of lodging a complaint against fate.

He is by no means sure that he has one; and when he finds that his love is vain, he translates it into friendship with a patient zeal capable almost of convincing his own soul that it is not a renunciation, but a consummation. Bersenev, Schubin, Zoe, Uvar Ivanovitsch, the indigent house friend, with his placid depths of unuttered commentary, the pompous egotist of a father, the feeble egotist of a mother—these people thoroughly animate the little world which surrounds the central couple; and if we wonder how it is that from half-a-dozen figures we get such a sense of the world's presence and complexity, we perceive the great sagacity of the choice of the types.

We should premise, in speaking of *A Nest of Noblemen* (the English translation bears, we believe, the simple title of *Lisa*), that of the two novels it was the earlier published. It dates from 1858; *Hélène*, from 1859. The theme is an unhappy marriage and an unhappy love. Fedor Ivanovitsch Lavretzky marries a pretty young woman, and after three years of confident bliss finds himself grossly deceived. He separates from his wife, returns from Paris, where his eyes have been unsealed, to Russia, and, in the course of time, retires to his patrimonial estates. Here, after the pain of his wound has ached itself away and the health and strength of life's prime have reaffirmed themselves, he encounters a young girl whom he comes at last to love with the double force of a tender heart that longs to redeem itself from bitterness. He receives news of his wife's death, and immediately presumes upon his freedom to express his passion. The young girl listens, responds, and for a few brief days they are happy. But the report of Madame Lavretzky's death has been, as the newspapers say, premature; she suddenly reappears to remind her husband of his bondage, and to convict Lisa almost of guilt. The pathetic force of the story lies, naturally, in its taking place in a country unfurnished with the modern facilities for divorce. Lisa and Lavretzky of course must part. Madame Lavretzky lives and blooms. Lisa goes into a convent, and her lover, defrauded of happiness, determines at least to try and be useful. He plows his fields and instructs his serfs. After the lapse of years he obtains entrance

into her convent, and catches a glimpse of her as she passes behind a grating, on her way across the chapel. She knows of his presence, but she does not even look at him; the trembling of her downcast lids alone betrays her sense of it. "What must they both have thought, have felt?" asks the author. "Who can know? who can say? There are moments in life, there are feelings, on which we can only cast a glance without stopping." With an unanswered question his story characteristically closes. The husband, the wife, and the lover—the wife, the husband, and the woman loved—these are combinations in which modern fiction has been prolific; but M. Turgenev's treatment renews the youth of the well-worn fable. He has found its moral interest, if we may make the distinction, deeper than its sentimental one; a pair of lovers accepting adversity seem to him more eloquent than a pair of lovers grasping at happiness. The moral of his tale, as we are free to gather it, is that there is no effective plotting for happiness, that we must take what we can get, that adversity is a capable millstream, and that our ingenuity must go toward making it grind our corn. Certain it is that there is something very exquisite in Lavretzky's history, and that M. Turgenev has drawn from a theme associated with all manner of uncleanness a story embalmed in a lovely aroma of purity. This purity, indeed, is but a pervasive emanation from the character of Lisaveta Michailovna. American readers of Turgenev have been struck with certain points of resemblance between American and Russian life. The resemblance is generally superficial; but it does not seem to us altogether fanciful to say that Russian young girls, as represented by Lisa, Tatiana, Maria Alexandrovna, have to our sense a touch of the faintly acrid perfume of the New England temperament—a hint of Puritan angularity. It is the women and young girls in our author's tales who mainly represent strength of will—the power to resist, to wait, to attain. Lisa represents it in all that heroic intensity which says so much more to M. Turgenev's imagination than feline grace. The character conspicuous in the same tale for feline grace—Varvara Pavlovna, Lavretzky's heartless wife—is conspicuous also for her moral flimsiness. In the integrity

of Lisa, of Hélène, even of the more dimly shadowed Maria Alexandrovna—a sort of finer distillation, as it seems, of masculine honor—there is something almost formidable: the strongest men are less positive in their strength. In the keenly pathetic scene in which Marfa Timofievna (the most delightful of the elderly maiden aunts of fiction) comes to Lisa in her room and implores her to renounce her project of entering a convent, we feel that there are depths of purpose in the young girl's deferential sweetness which nothing in the world can overcome. She is intensely religious, as she ought to be for psychological truth, and nothing could more effectually disconnect her from the usual ingénue of romance than our sense of the naturalness of her religious life. Her love for Lavretzky is a passion in its essence half renunciation. The first use she makes of the influence with him which his own love gives her is to try and reconcile him with his wife; and her foremost feeling, on learning that the latter is not dead, as they had believed, is an irremissible sense of pollution. The dusky antique consciousness of sin in this tender, virginal soul is a combination which we seem somehow to praise amiss in calling it picturesque, but which it would be still more inexact to call didactic. Lisa is altogether a most remarkable portrait, and one that readers of the heroine's own sex ought to contemplate with some complacency. They have been known to complain on the one hand that romancers abuse them, and on the other that they insufferably patronize them. Here is a picture drawn with all the tenderness of a lover, and yet with an undefinable, an almost unprecedented, *respect*. In this tale, as always with our author, the drama is quite uncommented; the poet never plays chorus; situations speak for themselves. When Lavretzky reads in the *chronique* of a French newspaper that his wife is dead, there is no description of his feelings, no portrayal of his mental attitude. The living, moving narrative has so effectually put us in the way of feeling with him, that we can be depended upon. He had been reading in bed before going to sleep, had taken up the paper and discovered the momentous paragraph. He "threw himself into his clothes," the author simply says, "went out into the garden, and walked

up and down till morning in the same alley." We close the book for a moment and pause, with a sense of personal excitement. But of M. Turgenev's genius for infusing a rich suggestiveness into common forms, the character of Gottlieb Lemm, the melancholy German music master, is a perhaps surpassing example. Never was homely truth more poetical; never was poetry more minutely veracious.

Lavretzky, sorely tried as he is, is perhaps the happiest of our author's heroes. He suffers great pain, but he has not the intolerable sense of having inflicted it on others. This is the lot, both of the hero of *Smoke* and of the fatally passive youth whose adventures we follow in the author's latest work. On *Smoke* we are unable to linger, as its theme is almost identical with that of *Spring-Torrents*, and the latter will be a novelty to a greater number of our readers. *Smoke*, with its powerful and painful interest, lacks, to our mind, the underlying sweetness of most of its companions. It has all their talent, but it has less of their spirit. It treats of a dangerous beauty who robs the loveliest girl in Russia of her plighted lover, and the story duly absorbs us; but we find that, for our own part, there is always a certain languor in our intellectual acceptance of the grand coquettes of fiction. It is obviously a hard picture to paint; we always seem to see the lady pushing about her train before the footlights, or glancing at the orchestra stalls during her victim's agony. In the portrait of Irene, however, there are very fine intentions, and the reader is charmed forward very much as poor Litvinof was. The figure of Tatiana, however, is full of the wholesome perfume of nature. *Smoke* was preceded by *Fathers and Sons*, which dates from ten years ago, and was the first of M. Turgenev's tales to be translated in America. In none of them is the subject of wider scope or capable of having more of the author's insidious melancholy expressed from it; for the figures with which he has filled his foreground are, with their personal interests and adventures, but the symbols of the shadowy forces which are fighting forever a larger battle—the battle of the old and the new, the past and the future, the ideas that arrive with the ideas that linger. Half the tragedies in human history

are born of this conflict; and in all that poets and philosophers tell us of it, the clearest fact is still its perpetual necessity. The opposing forces in M. Turgenev's novel are an elder and a younger generation; the drama can indeed never have a more poignant interest than when we see the young world, as it grows to a sense of its strength and its desires, turning to smite the old world which has brought it forth with a mother's tears and a mother's hopes. The young world, in *Fathers and Sons*, is the fiercer combatant; and the old world in fact is simply forever the *victa causa*, which even stoics pity. And yet with M. Turgenev, characteristically, the gaining cause itself is purely relative, and victors and vanquished are commingled in a common assent to fate. Here, as always, his rare discretion serves him, and rescues him from the danger of exaggerating his representative types. Few figures in his pages are more intelligibly human than Pavel Petrovitch and Eugene Bazarov—human each of them in his indefeasible weakness, the one in spite of his small allowances, the other in spite of his brutal claims. In Kirsanov (the farmer) the author has imaged certain things he instinctively values,—the hundred fading traditions of which the now vulgarized idea of the “gentleman” is the epitome. He loves him, of course, as a romancer must, but he has done the most impartial justice to the ridiculous aspect of his position. Bazarov is a so-called “nihilist,”—a red-handed radical, fresh from the shambles of criticism, with Büchner's *Stoff und Kraft* as a textbook, and everything in nature and history for his prey. He is young, strong, and clever, and strides about, rejoicing in his skepticism, sparing nothing, human or divine, and proposing to have demolished the universe before he runs his course. But he finds there is something stronger, cleverer, longer-lived than himself, and that death is a fiercer nihilist than even Büchner. The tale traces the course of the summer vacation, which he comes to spend in the country with a college friend, and is chiefly occupied with the record of the various trials to which, in this short period, experience subjects his philosophy. They all foreshadow, of course, the supreme dramatic test. He falls in love, and tries to deny his love as he

denies everything else, but the best he can do is only to express it in a coarse formula. M. Turgenev is always fond of contrasts, and he has not failed to give Bazarov a foil in his young comrade, Arcadi Kirsanov, who represents the merely impermanent and imitative element which clings to the skirts of every great movement. Bazarov is silenced by death, but it takes a very small dose of life to silence Arcadi. The latter belongs to the nobility, and Bazarov's exploits in his tranquil, conventional home are those of a lusty young bull in a cabinet of rococo china. Exquisitely imagined is the whole attitude and demeanor of Pavel Petrovitsch, Arcadi's uncle, and a peculiarly happy invention the duel which this perfumed conservative considers it his manifest duty to fight in behalf of gentlemanly ideas. The deeper interest of the tale, however, begins when the young Büchnerite repairs to his own provincial home, and turns to a pinch of dust the tender superstitions of the poor old parental couple who live only in their pride in their great learned son, and have not even a genteel prejudice, of any consequence, to oppose to his terrible positivism. M. Turgenev has written nothing finer than this last half of his story; every touch is masterly, every detail is eloquent. In Vassili Ivanovitsch and Arina Vlassievna he has shown us the sentient heart which still may throb in disused forms and not be too proud to subsist awhile yet by the charity of science. Their timid devotion to their son, their roundabout caresses, their longings and hopes and fears, and their deeply pathetic stupefaction when it begins to be plain that the world can spare him, all form a picture which, in spite of its dealing with small things in a small style, carries us to the uttermost limits of the tragical. A very noticeable stroke of art, also, is Bazarov's ever-growing discontentment—a chronic moral irritation, provoked not by the pangs of an old-fashioned conscience, but, naturally enough, by the absence of the agreeable in a world which he has subjected to such exhaustive disintegration. We especially recommend to the reader his long talk with Arcadi as they lie on the grass in the mid-summer shade, and Bazarov kicks out viciously at everything propounded by his more ingenuous companion. Toward him

too he feels vicious, and we quite understand the impulse, identical with that which in a nervous woman would find expression in a fit of hysterics, through which the overwrought young rationalist, turning to Arcadi with an alarming appearance of real gusto, proposes to fight with him, "to the extinction of animal heat." We must find room for the portrait of Arina Vlassievna:

[She] was a real type of the small Russian gentry of the old régime; she ought to have come into the world two hundred years sooner, in the time of the grand dukes of Moscow. Easily impressed, deeply pious, she believed in all signs and tokens, divinations, sorceries, dreams; she believed in the *Iourodivi* [half-witted persons, popularly held sacred], in familiar spirits, in those of the woods, in evil meetings, in the evil eye, in popular cures, in the virtue of salt placed upon the altar on Good Friday, in the impending end of the world; she believed that if the tapers at the midnight mass in Lent do not go out, the crop of buckwheat will be good, and that mushrooms cease to grow as soon as human eye has rested on them; she believed that the Devil likes places where there is water, and that all Jews have a blood-spot on their chests; she was afraid of mice, snakes, toads, sparrows, leeches, thunder, cold water, draughts of air, horses, goats, red-haired men, and black cats, and considered crickets and dogs as impure creatures; she ate neither veal, nor pigeons, nor lobsters, nor cheese, nor asparagus, nor hare, nor watermelon (because a melon opened resembled the dissevered head of John the Baptist), and the mere idea of oysters, which she did not know even by sight, caused her to shudder; she liked to eat well, and fasted rigorously; she slept ten hours a day, and never went to bed at all if Vassili Ivanovitch complained of a headache. The only book which she had read was called *Alexis, or The Cottage in the Forest*; she wrote at most one or two letters a year, and was an excellent judge of sweetmeats and preserves, though she put her own hand to nothing, and, as a general thing, preferred not to move. . . . She was anxious, was perpetually expecting some great misfortune, and began to cry as soon as she remembered anything sad. Women of this kind are beginning to be rare; God knows whether we should be glad of it.

The novel which we have chosen as the text of these remarks was published a couple of years since. It strikes us at first as a *réchauffé* of old material, the subject being identical with that of *Smoke*, and very similar to that of the short masterpiece called *A Correspondence*. The subject is one of the saddest in the world, and we shall have to reproach M. Turgenev with delighting in sadness. But *Spring-Torrents* has a narrative charm which sweetens its bitter waters, and we may add that, from the writer's point of view, the theme does differ by several shades from that of the tales we have mentioned. These treat of the fatal weakness of will, which M. Turgenev apparently considers the peculiar vice of the new generation in Russia; *Spring-Torrents* illustrates, more generally, the element of folly which mingles, in a certain measure, in all youthful spontaneity, and makes us grow to wisdom by the infliction of suffering. The youthful folly of Dmitri Sanin has been great, the memory of it haunts him for years, and lays on him at last such an icy grip that his heart will break unless he can repair it. The opening sentences of the story indicate the key in which it is pitched. We may quote them as an example of the way in which M. Turgenev almost invariably appeals at the outset to our distinctively *moral* curiosity, our sympathy with character. Something tells us, in this opening strain, that we are not invited to lend ear to the mere dead rattle which rises forever from the surface of life:

... Toward two o'clock at night, he came back into his sitting room. The servant who had lighted the candles he sent away, threw himself into a chair by the chimney-piece, and covered his face with his hands. Never had he felt such a weariness of body and soul. He had been spending the whole evening with graceful women, with cultivated men; some of the women were pretty, almost all the men were distinguished for wit and talent; he himself had talked with good effect, even brilliantly, and yet, with all this, never had that *taedium vitae*, of which the Romans already speak, that sense of disgust with life, pressed upon him and taken possession of him in such an irresistible fashion. Had he been somewhat younger, he would have wept for sadness, for ennui, and overwrought nerves: a

corroding, burning bitterness, like the bitterness of wormwood, filled his whole soul. Something irrefragable—cold, sickening, oppressive—crowded in upon him from all sides like autumn dusk, and he knew not how he could free himself from this duskiness and bitterness. He could not count upon sleep; he knew he should not sleep. . . . He began to muse,—slowly, sadly, bitterly. . . . He thought of the vanity, the uselessness, the common falsity, of the whole human race. . . . He shook his head, sprang up from his seat, walked several times up and down the room, sat down at his writing table, pulled out one drawer after the other, and began to fumble among old papers, mostly letters in a woman's hand. He knew not why he did it,—he was looking for nothing,—he simply wished to seek refuge in an outward occupation from the thoughts that tormented him. . . . He got up, went back to the fireplace, sank into his chair again, and covered his face with his hands. . . . "Why today, just today?" he thought; and many a memory from the long-vanished past rose up in him. He remembered—this is what he remembered.

On his way back to Russia from a foreign tour he meets, at Frankfort, a young girl of modest origin but extraordinary beauty—the daughter of an Italian confectioner. Accident brings them together, he falls in love with her, holds himself ardently ready to marry her, obtains her mother's consent, and has only, to make the marriage possible, to raise money on his Russian property, which is of moderate value. While he is revolving schemes he encounters an old schoolfellow, an odd personage, now married to an heiress who, as fortune has it, possesses an estate in the neighborhood of Sanin's own. It occurs to the latter that Madame Polosov may be induced to buy his land, and, as she understands "business" and manages her own affairs, he repairs to Wiesbaden, with leave obtained from his betrothed, to make his proposal. The reader of course foresees the sequel—the reader, especially, who is practiced in Turgenev. Madame Polosov understands business and much else beside. She is young, lovely, unscrupulous, dangerous, fatal. Sanin succumbs to the spell, forgets honor, duty, tenderness, prudence, everything, and after three days of bewildered

resistance finds himself packed into the lady's traveling carriage with her other belongings, and rolling toward Paris. But we foresee that he comes speedily to his senses; the spring torrent is spent. The years that follow are as arid as brooding penitence can make them. Penitence, after that night of bitter memories, takes an active shape. He makes a pilgrimage to Frankfort, and seeks for some trace of the poor girl he had deserted. With much trouble he obtains tidings, and learns that she is married in America; that she is happy, and that she serenely forgives him. He returns to St. Petersburg, spends there a short, restless interval, and suddenly disappears. People say he has gone to America. The spring torrents exhale themselves in autumn mists. Sanin, in the Frankfort episode, is not only very young, but very Russian; how young, how Russian, this charming description tells:

He was, to begin with, a really very good-looking fellow. He had a tall, slender figure, agreeable, rather vague features, kindly blue eyes, a fair complexion, suffused with a fresh red, and, above all, that genial, joyous, confiding, upright expression, which at the first glance, perhaps, seems to give an air of limitation, but by which, in former times, you recognized the son of a tranquil aristocratic family—a son of the “fathers,” a good country gentleman born and grown up, stoutly, in those fruitful provinces of ours which border on the steppe; then, a somewhat shuffling gait, a slightly hissing way of speaking, a childlike laugh, as soon as anyone looked at him, . . . health, in short, freshness and a softness,—a softness! . . . there you have all Sanin. Along with this he was by no means dull, and had learnt a good many things. He had remained fresh in spite of his journey abroad; those tumultuous impulses which imposed themselves upon the best part of the young men of that day were little known to him.

If we place beside this vivid portrait the sketch, hardly less expressive, of Madame Polosov, we find in the mere apposition the germ of a novel:

Not that she was a perfect beauty; the traces of her plebeian origin were perceptible enough. Her forehead was low, her

nose rather thick and inclining to an upward inflection; she could boast neither of a fine skin nor of pretty hands and feet. But what did all this signify? Not before the "sanctity of beauty"—to use Pushkin's words—would he who met her have stood lingering, but before the charm of the powerful half-Russian, half-Bohemian, blooming, womanly body,—and he would not have lingered involuntarily!

Madame Polosov, though her exploits are related in a short sixty-five pages, is unfolded in the large dramatic manner. We seem to be in her presence, to listen to her provoking, bewildering talk, to feel the danger of her audacious, conscious frankness. Her quite peculiar cruelty and depravity make a large demand on our credulity; she is perhaps a trifle too picturesquely vicious. But she is strangely, vividly natural, and our imagination goes with her in the same charmed mood as with M. Turgenev's other evildoers. Not without an effort, too, do we accept the possibility of Sanin's immediate infidelity to the object of the pure still passion with which his heart even yet overflows. But these are wonderful mysteries; its immediacy, perhaps, best accounts for it; spring torrents, the author would seem to intimate, *must* flow, and ravage their blooming channels. To give a picture of the immeasurable blindness of youth, of its eagerness of desire, its freshness of impression, its mingled rawness and ripeness, the swarming, shifting possibilities of its spring-time, and to interfuse his picture with something of the softening poetizing harmony of retrospect,—this has been but half the author's purpose. He has designed beside to paint the natural conflict between soul and sense, and to make the struggle less complex than the one he has described in *Smoke*, and less brutal, as it were, than the fatal victory of sense in *A Correspondence*. "When will it all come to an end?" Sanin asks, as he stares helpless at Maria Nikolaievna, and feels himself ignobly paralyzed. "Weak men," says the author, "never themselves make an end—they always wait for the end." Sanin's history is charged with the moral that salvation lies in being able, at a given moment, to bring one's *will* down like a hammer. If M. Turgenev pays his tribute to the magic of sense, he leaves us

also eloquently reminded that soul in the long run claims her own. He has given us no sweeter image of uncorrupting passion than this figure of Gemma, the frank, young Italian nature blooming in northern air from its own mere wealth of joyousness. Yet, charming as Gemma is, she is but a half sister of Lisa and Tatiana. Neither Lisa nor Tatiana, we suspect, would have read popular comedy with her enchanting mimicry; but, on the other hand, they would have been withheld by a delicate, indefinable conscientiousness from caricaturing the dismissed lover of the day before for the entertainment of the accepted lover of the present. But Gemma is a charming piece of coloring, and all this only proves how many different ways there are of being the loveliest girl in the world. The accessories of her portrait are as happily rendered; the whole picture of the little Italian household, with its narrow back-shop life in the German town, has a mellow enclosed light in which the reader gratefully lingers. It touches the figure of the usual half-fantastic house friend, the poor old ex-baritone Pantaleone Cippatola, into the most vivacious relief.

III

We always desire more information about the writers who greatly interest us than we find in their works, and many American readers have probably a friendly curiosity as to the private personality of M. Turgenev. We are reduced, however, to regretting our own meager knowledge. We gather from his writings that our author is much of a cosmopolitan, a dweller in many cities, and a frequenter of many societies, and, along with this, an indefinable sense of his being of a so-called "aristocratic" temperament; so that if a man's genius were visible to the eye, like his fleshly integument, that of M. Turgenev would be observed to have, say, very shapely hands and feet, and a nose expressive of the patrician graces. A friend of ours, indeed, who has rather an irresponsible fancy, assures us that the author of *Smoke* (which he considers his masterpiece) is, personally, simply his own Pavel Kirsanov. Twenty to one our friend is quite wrong; but we may nevertheless say that, to

readers disposed now and then to risk a conjecture, much of the charm of M. Turgenev's manner resides in this impalpable union of an aristocratic temperament with a democratic intellect. To his inquisitive intellect we owe the various, abundant, human substance of his tales, and to his fastidious temperament their exquisite form. But we must not meddle too freely with causes, when results themselves are so suggestive. The great question as to a poet or a novelist is, How does he feel about life? what, in the last analysis, is his philosophy? When vigorous writers have reached maturity, we are at liberty to gather from their works some expression of a total view of the world they have been so actively observing. This is the most interesting thing their works offer us. Details are interesting in proportion as they contribute to make it clear.

The foremost impression of M. Turgenev's reader is that he is morbidly serious, that he takes life terribly hard. We move in an atmosphere of unrelieved sadness. We go from one tale to the other in the hope of finding something cheerful, but we only wander into fresh agglomerations of gloom. We try the shorter stories, with a hope of chancing upon something pitched in the traditional key of "light reading," but they strike us alike as so many ingenious condensations of melancholy. *A Village Lear* is worse than *The Antichar*; *The Forsaken* is hardly an improvement on *A Correspondence*; *The Journal of a Superfluous Man* does little to lay the haunting ghost of *Three Portraits*. The author has written several short dramas. Appealing to them to beguile us of our dusky vapors, we find the concentrated tragedy of *The Bread of Charity*, and, by way of an afterpiece, the lugubrious humor of *The Division*. Sad beginnings, worse endings, good people ineffably wretched, happy ones hugely ridiculous, disappointment, despair, madness, suicide, degrading passions, and blighted hopes—these seem, on first acquaintance, the chief ingredients of M. Turgenev's version of the human drama; and to deepen our sense of its bitterness, we discover the author in the background winding up his dismal demonstration with a chuckle. We set him down forthwith as a cold-blooded pessimist, caring for nothing in life but its

misery, and for nothing in misery but its picturesqueness—its capacity for furnishing cynical epigrams. What is each of the short tales we have mentioned, we ask, but a ruthless epigram, in the dramatic form, upon human happiness? Evlampia Charlov, in *A Village Lear*, drives her father to madness and death by her stony depravity, and then joins a set of religious fanatics, among whom she plays a great part as the *Holy Mother of God*. In *The Bread of Charity*, a young heiress brings home to her estates her newly wedded husband, and introduces him to her old neighbors. They dine with him, and one of them, an officious coxcomb, conceives the brilliant idea of entertaining him by an exhibition of a poor old gentleman who has long been hanging about the place as a pensioner of the late parents of the young wife, and is remarkable for a dumb canine attachment to herself. He plies the modest old man with wine, winds him up, and makes him play the fool. But suddenly Kusovkin, through the fumes of his potations, perceives that he is being laughed at, and breaks out into a passionate assurance that, baited and buffeted as he is, he is nothing less than the father of the mistress of the house. She overhears his cry, and though he, horrified at his indiscretion, attempts to retract it, she wins from him a confession of the fact that he had been her mother's lover. The husband, however, makes him swallow his words, and do public penance. He turns him out of the house with a small pension, and the curtain falls on the compliment offered this fine fellow by the meddlesome neighbor on his generosity: "You are a true Russian gentleman!" The most perfectly epigrammatic of our author's stories, however, is perhaps that polished little piece of misery, *A Correspondence*. A young man, idle, discontented, and longing for better things, writes, for a pastime, to a young girl whom he has formerly slightly known and greatly esteemed, who has entertained an unsuspected and unrequited passion for him, and who lives obscurely in the country, among very common people. A correspondence comes of it, in the course of which they exchange confidences and unburden their hearts. The young girl is most pitiable, most amiable, in her sadness, and her friend begins to suspect

that she, at last, may give a meaning to his aimless life. She, on her side, is compassionately interested, and we see curiosity and hope throbbing timidly beneath the austere resignation to which she has schooled herself, and the expression of which, mingled with our sense of her blooming beauty of character, makes of Maria Alexandrovna the most nobly fascinating, perhaps, of our author's heroines. Alexis Petrovitsch writes at last that he must see her, that he will come to her, that she is to expect him at such a date, and we imagine tenderly, in the unhastening current of her days, the gentle eddy of her expectation. Her next letter, after an interval, expresses surprise at his nonappearance; her next, several months later, is a last attempt to obtain news of him. The correspondence closes with his confession, written as he lies dying at Dresden. Just as he was starting to join her, he had encountered another woman, a dancing girl at the opera, with whom he had fallen madly in love. She was low, stupid, heartless; she had nothing to recommend her to anything but his senses. It was ignoble, but so it was. His passion has led him such a life that his health is gone. He has brought on disease of the lungs by waiting for the young lady at the opera door in the winter nights. Now his hours are numbered, and this is the end of all! And on this lugubrious note the story closes. We read with intent curiosity, for the tale is a masterpiece of narration; but we wonder, in some vexation, what it all means. Is it a piece of irony for irony's sake, or is it a disinterested picture of the struggle between base passion and pure passion? Why, in that case, should it seem a matter of course for the author that base passion should carry the day? Why, as for Rudin, for Sanin, for the distracted hero of *Smoke*, should circumstances also have been too many, as the phrase is, for poor Alexis Petrovitsch? If we pursue our researches, in the hope of finding some method in this promiscuous misery, examples continue to seem more numerous than principles. The author continues everywhere to imply that there is something essentially ridiculous in human nature, something indefeasibly vain in human effort. We are amazed, as we go, at the portentous number of his patent fools; no novelist has drawn a tenth as

many. The large majority of his people are the people we laugh at, and a large fraction of the remainder the people we half disgustedly pity. There is little room left, therefore, for the people we esteem, and yet room enough perhaps, considering that our very benevolence is tempered with skepticism. What with the vicious fools and the well-meaning fools, the prosperous charlatans and the grotesque nonentities, the dead failures and the sadder failures that regret and protest and rebel, the demoralized lovers and the jilted maidens, the dusky pall of fatality, in a word, suspended over all human things, it may be inferred that we are not invited to a particularly exhilarating spectacle. Not a single person in the novel of *Fathers and Sons* but has, in some degree, a lurking ironical meaning. Everyone is a more or less ludicrous parody on what he ought to have been, or an ineffectual regret over what he might have been. The only person who compasses a reasonable share of happiness is Arcadi, and even his happiness is a thing for strenuous minds to smile at—a happiness based on the *pot au feu*, the prospect of innumerable babies, and the sacrifice of “views.” Arcadi’s father is a vulgar failure; Pavel Petrovitch is a poetic failure; Bazarov is a tragic failure; Anna Sergheievna misses happiness from an ungenerous fear of sacrificing her luxurious quietude; the elder Bazarov and his wife seem a couple of ingeniously grotesque manikins, prepared by a melancholy *fantoccinista* to illustrate the mocking vanity of parental hopes. We lay down the book, and we repeat that, with all the charity in the world, it is impossible to pronounce M. Turgenev anything better than a pessimist.

The judgment is just, but it needs qualifications, and it finds them in a larger look at the author’s position. M. Turgenev strikes us, as we have said, as a man disappointed, for good reasons or for poor ones, in the land which is dear to him. Harsh critics will say, for poor ones, reflecting that a fastidious imagination has not been unconcerned in his discontentment. To the old Muscovite virtues, and especially the old Muscovite naïveté, his imagination filially clings, but he finds these things, especially in the face which his country turns to the outer

world, melting more and more every day into the dimness of tradition. The Russians are clever, and clever people are ambitious. Those with whom M. Turgenev has seen himself surrounded are consumed with the desire to pass for intellectual cosmopolites, to know, or to seem to know, everything that can be known, to be astoundingly modern and progressive and European. Madame Kukshin, the poor little literary lady with a red nose, in *Fathers and Sons*, gives up George Sand as "nowhere" for her want of knowledge of embryology, and, when asked why she proposes to remove to Heidelberg, replies with, "Bunsen, you know." The fermentation of social change has thrown to the surface in Russia a deluge of hollow pretensions and vicious presumptions, amid which the love either of old virtues or of new achievements finds very little gratification. It is not simply that people flounder laughably in deeper waters than they can breast, but that in this discord of crude ambitions the integrity of character itself is compromised, and men and women make, morally, a very ugly appearance. The Russian colony at Baden-Baden, depicted in *Smoke*, is a collection of more or less inflated profligates. Panschin, in *A Nest of Noblemen*, is another example; Sitnikov, in *Fathers and Sons*, a still more contemptible one. Driven back, depressed and embittered, into his imagination for the edification which the social spectacle immediately before him refuses him, and shaped by nature to take life hard and linger among its shadows, our observer surrenders himself with a certain reactionary, irresponsible gusto to a shaded portrayal of things. An imaginative preference for dusky subjects is a perfectly legitimate element of the artistic temperament; our own Hawthorne is a signal case of its being innocently exercised; innocently, because with that delightfully unconscious genius it remained imaginative, sportive, inconclusive, to the end. When external circumstances, however, contribute to confirm it, and reality lays her groaning stores of misery at its feet, it will take a rarely elastic genius altogether to elude the charge of being morbid. M. Turgenev's pessimism seems to us of two sorts—a spontaneous melancholy and a wanton melancholy. Sometimes, in a sad

story, it is the problem, the question, the idea, that strikes him; sometimes it is simply the picture. Under the first influences he has produced his masterpieces; we admit that they are intensely sad, but we consent to be moved, as we consent to sit silent in a death chamber. In the other case he has done but his second best; we strike a bargain over our tears, and insist that when it comes to being simply entertained, wooing and wedding are better than death and burial. *The Antchar, The Forsaken, A Superfluous Man, A Village Lear, Toc . . . toc . . . toc*, all seem to us to be gloomier by several shades than they need have been; for we hold to the good old belief that the presumption, in life, is in favor of the brighter side, and we deem it, in art, an indispensable condition of our interest in a depressed observer that he should have at least tried his best to be cheerful. The truth, we take it, lies for the pathetic in poetry and romance very much where it lies for the "immoral." Morbid pathos is reflective pathos, ingenious pathos, pathos not freshly born of the occasion; noxious immorality is superficial immorality, immorality without natural roots in the subject. We value most the "realists" who have an ideal of delicacy, and the elegiacs who have an ideal of joy.

"Picturesque gloom, possibly," a thick and thin admirer of M. Turgenev may say to us, "at least you will admit that it *is* picturesque." This we heartily concede, and, recalled to a sense of our author's brilliant diversity and ingenuity, we bring our restrictions to a close. To the broadly generous side of his imagination it is impossible to pay exaggerated homage, or, indeed, for that matter, to its simple intensity and fecundity. No romancer has created a greater number of the figures that breathe and move and speak, in their habits, as they might have lived; none, on the whole, seems to us to have had such a masterly touch in portraiture, none has mingled so much ideal beauty with so much unsparing reality. His sadness has its element of errors, but it has also its larger element of wisdom. Life *is*, in fact, a battle. On this point optimists and pessimists agree. Evil is insolent and strong; beauty, enchanting but rare; goodness, very apt to be weak; folly, very apt

to be defiant; wickedness, to carry the day; imbeciles to be in great places, people of sense in small; and mankind, generally, unhappy. But the world, as it stands, is no illusion, no phantasm, no evil dream of a night; we wake up to it again forever and ever; we can neither forget it, nor deny it, nor dispense with it. We can welcome experience as it comes, and give it what it demands in exchange for something which it is idle to pause to call much or little, so long as it contributes to swell the volume of consciousness. In this there is mingled pain and delight, but over the mysterious mixture there hovers a visible rule, which bids us learn to will and seek to understand. So much as this we seem to decipher between the lines of M. Turgenev's minutely written chronicle. He himself has sought to understand as zealously as his most eminent competitors. He gives, at least, no meager account of life, and he has done liberal justice to its infinite variety. This is his great merit; his great defect, roughly stated, is a tendency to the abuse of irony. He remains, nevertheless, to our sense, a very welcome mediator between the world and our curiosity. If we had space, we should like to set forth that he is by no means our ideal storyteller,—this honorable genius possessing, attributively, a rarer skill than the finest required for producing an artful *réchauffé* of the actual. But even for better romancers we must wait for a better world. Whether the world in its highest state of perfection will occasionally offer color to scandal, we hesitate to pronounce; but we are prone to conceive of the ultimate novelist as a personage altogether purged of sarcasm. The imaginative force now expended in this direction, he will devote to describing cities of gold and heavens of sapphire. But, for the present, we gratefully accept M. Turgenev, and reflect that his manner suits the most moods of the most readers. If he were a dogmatic optimist, we suspect that, as things go, we should long ago have ceased to miss him from our library. The personal optimism of most of us no romancer can confirm or dissipate, and our personal troubles, generally, place fictions of all kinds in an impertinent light. To our usual working mood the world is apt to seem M. Tur-

genev's hard world, and when, at moments, the strain and the pressure deepen, the ironical element figures not a little in our form of address to those short-sighted friends who have whispered that it is an easy one.

From HAWTHORNE *

CHAPTER V

The Three American Novels

The prospect of official station and emolument which Hawthorne mentions in one of those paragraphs from his Journals which I have just quoted, as having offered itself and then passed away, was at last, in the event, confirmed by his receiving from the administration of President Polk the gift of a place in the customhouse of his native town. The office was a modest one, and "official station" may perhaps appear a magniloquent formula for the functions sketched in the admirable Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne's duties were those of Surveyor of the port of Salem, and they had a salary attached, which was the important part; as his biographer tells us that he had received almost nothing for the contributions to the *Democratic Review*. He bade farewell to his ex-parsonage, and went back to Salem in 1846, and the immediate effect of his ameliorated fortune was to make him stop writing. None of his Journals of the period, from his going to Salem to 1850, have been published; from which I infer that he even ceased to journalize. *The Scarlet Letter* was not written till 1849. In the delightful prologue to that work, entitled "The Customhouse," he embodies some of the impressions gathered during these years of comparative leisure (I say of leisure, because he does not intimate in this sketch of his occupations that his duties were onerous). He intimates, however, that they were not interesting, and that it was a very good thing for him, mentally and morally, when his term of service expired—or rather when he was removed from office by the operation of that wonderful "rotatory" system which his countrymen had

*Hawthorne (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879). Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

invented for the administration of their affairs. This sketch of the customhouse is, as simple writing, one of the most perfect of Hawthorne's compositions, and one of the most gracefully and humorously autobiographic. It would be interesting to examine it in detail, but I prefer to use my space for making some remarks upon the work which was the ultimate result of this period of Hawthorne's residence in his native town; and I shall, for convenience' sake, say directly afterwards what I have to say about the two companions of *The Scarlet Letter*—*The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Blithedale Romance*. I quoted some passages from the prologue to the first of these novels in the early pages of this essay. There is another passage, however, which bears particularly upon this phase of Hawthorne's career, and which is so happily expressed as to make it a pleasure to transcribe it—the passage in which he says that “for myself, during the whole of my customhouse experience, moonlight and sunshine, and the glow of the fire-light, were just alike in my regard, and neither of them was of one whit more avail than the twinkle of a tallow candle. An entire class of susceptibilities, and a gift connected with them—of no great richness or value, but the best I had—was gone from me.” He goes on to say that he believes that he might have done something if he could have made up his mind to convert the very substance of the commonplace that surrounded him into matter of literature.

I might, for instance, have contented myself with writing out the narratives of a veteran shipmaster, one of the inspectors, whom I should be most ungrateful not to mention; since scarcely a day passed that he did not stir me to laughter and admiration by his marvelous gift as a storyteller. . . . Or I might readily have found a more serious task. It was a folly, with the materiality of this daily life pressing so intrusively upon me, to attempt to fling myself back into another age; or to insist on creating a semblance of a world out of airy matter. . . . The wiser effort would have been, to diffuse thought and imagination through the opaque substance of today, and thus make it a bright transparency . . . to seek resolutely the true and indestructible value that lay hidden in the petty and wearisome

incidents and ordinary characters with which I was now conversant. The fault was mine. The page of life that was spread out before me was dull and commonplace, only because I had not fathomed its deeper import. A better book than I shall ever write was there. . . . These perceptions came too late. . . . I had ceased to be a writer of tolerably poor tales and essays, and had become a tolerably good surveyor of the customs. That was all. But, nevertheless, it is anything but agreeable to be haunted by a suspicion that one's intellect is dwindling away, or exhaling, without your consciousness, like ether out of phial; so that at every glance you find a smaller and less volatile residuum.

As, however, it was with what was left of his intellect after three years' evaporation, that Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter*, there is little reason to complain of the injury he suffered in his surveyorship.

His publisher, Mr. Fields, in a volume entitled *Yesterdays with Authors*, has related the circumstances in which Hawthorne's masterpiece came into the world.

In the winter of 1849, after he had been ejected from the customhouse, I went down to Salem to see him and inquire after his health, for we heard he had been suffering from illness. He was then living in a modest wooden house. . . . I found him alone in a chamber over the sitting room of the dwelling, and as the day was cold he was hovering near a stove. We fell into talk about his future prospects, and he was, as I feared I should find him, in a very desponding mood.

His visitor urged him to bethink himself of publishing something, and Hawthorne replied by calling his attention to the small popularity his published productions had yet acquired, and declaring he had done nothing, and had no spirit for doing anything. The narrator of the incident urged upon him the necessity of a more hopeful view of his situation, and proceeded to take leave. He had not reached the street, however, when Hawthorne hurried to overtake him, and, placing a roll of MS. in his hand, bade him take it to Boston, read it, and pronounce upon it. "It is either very good or very bad," said the author;

"I don't know which." "On my way back to Boston," says Mr. Fields, "I read the germ of *The Scarlet Letter*; before I slept that night I wrote him a note all aglow with admiration of the marvelous story he had put into my hands, and told him that I would come again to Salem the next day and arrange for its publication. I went on in such an amazing state of excitement, when we met again in the little house, that he would not believe I was really in earnest. He seemed to think I was beside myself, and laughed sadly at my enthusiasm." Hawthorne, however, went on with the book and finished it, but it appeared only a year later. His biographer quotes a passage from a letter which he wrote in February, 1850, to his friend Horatio Bridge.

I finished my book only yesterday; one end being in the press at Boston, while the other was in my head here at Salem; so that, as you see, my story is at least fourteen miles long. . . . My book, the publisher tells me, will not be out before April. He speaks of it in tremendous terms of approbation; so does Mrs. Hawthorne, to whom I read the conclusion last night. It broke her heart, and sent her to bed with a grievous headache—which I look upon as a triumphant success. Judging from the effect upon her and the publisher, I may calculate on what bowlers call a ten-strike. But I don't make any such calculation.

And Mr. Lathrop calls attention, in regard to this passage, to an allusion in the *English Note-Books* (September 14, 1855).

Speaking of Thackeray, I cannot but wonder at his coolness in respect to his own pathos, and compare it to my own emotions when I read the last scene of *The Scarlet Letter* to my wife, just after writing it—tried to read it, rather, for my voice swelled and heaved as if I were tossed up and down on an ocean as it subsides after a storm. But I was in a very nervous state then, having gone through a great diversity of emotion while writing it, for many months.

The work has the tone of the **circumstances** in which it was produced. If Hawthorne was in a **somber** mood, and if his future was painfully vague, *The Scarlet Letter* contains little

enough of gaiety or of hopefulness. It is densely dark, with a single spot of vivid color in it; and it will probably long remain the most consistently gloomy of English novels of the first order. But I just now called it the author's masterpiece, and I imagine it will continue to be, for other generations than ours, his most substantial title to fame. The subject had probably lain a long time in his mind, as his subjects were apt to do; so that he appears completely to possess it, to know it and feel it. It is simpler and more complete than his other novels; it achieves more perfectly what it attempts, and it has about it that charm, very hard to express, which we find in an artist's work the first time he has touched his highest mark—a sort of straightness and naturalness of execution, an unconsciousness of his public, and freshness of interest in his theme. It was a great success, and he immediately found himself famous. The writer of these lines, who was a child at the time, remembers dimly the sensation the book produced, and the little shudder with which people alluded to it, as if a peculiar horror were mixed with its attractions. He was too young to read it himself; but its title, upon which he fixed his eyes as the book lay upon the table, had a mysterious charm. He had a vague belief, indeed, that the "letter" in question was one of the documents that come by the post, and it was a source of perpetual wonderment to him that it should be of such an unaccustomed hue. Of course it was difficult to explain to a child the significance of poor Hester Prynne's blood-colored *A*. But the mystery was at last partly dispelled by his being taken to see a collection of pictures (the annual exhibition of the National Academy), where he encountered a representation of a pale, handsome woman, in a quaint black dress and a white coif, holding between her knees an elfish-looking little girl, fantastically dressed, and crowned with flowers. Embroidered on the woman's breast was a great crimson *A*, over which the child's fingers, as she glanced strangely out of the picture, were maliciously playing. I was told that this was Hester Prynne and little Pearl, and that when I grew older I might read their interesting history. But the picture remained vividly imprinted

on my mind; I had been vaguely frightened and made uneasy by it; and when, years afterwards, I first read the novel, I seemed to myself to have read it before, and to be familiar with its two strange heroines. I mention this incident simply as an indication of the degree to which the success of *The Scarlet Letter* had made the book what is called an actuality. Hawthorne himself was very modest about it; he wrote to his publisher, when there was a question of his undertaking another novel, that what had given the history of Hester Prynne its "vogue" was simply the introductory chapter. In fact, the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* was in the United States a literary event of the first importance. The book was the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in the country. There was a consciousness of this in the welcome that was given it—a satisfaction in the idea of America having produced a novel that belonged to literature, and to the forefront of it. Something might at last be sent to Europe as exquisite in quality as anything that had been received, and the best of it was that the thing was absolutely American; it belonged to the soil, to the air; it came out of the very heart of New England.

It is beautiful, admirable, extraordinary; it has in the highest degree that merit which I have spoken of as the mark of Hawthorne's best things—an indefinable purity and lightness of conception, a quality which in a work of art affects one in the same way as the absence of grossness does in a human being. His fancy, as I just now said, had evidently brooded over the subject for a long time; the situation to be represented had disclosed itself to him in all its phases. When I say in all its phases, the sentence demands modification; for it is to be remembered that if Hawthorne laid his hand upon the well-worn theme, upon the familiar combination of the wife, the lover, and the husband, it was, after all, but to **one** period of the history of these three persons that he attached himself. The situation is the situation after the woman's **fault** has been committed, and the current of expiation and repentance has set in. In spite of the relation between Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, no story of love was surely ever less of a "love story."

To Hawthorne's imagination the fact that these two persons had loved each other too well was of an interest comparatively vulgar; what appealed to him was the idea of their moral situation in the long years that were to follow. The story, indeed, is in a secondary degree that of Hester Prynne; she becomes, really, after the first scene, an accessory figure; it is not upon her the denouement depends. It is upon her guilty lover that the author projects most frequently the cold, thin rays of his fitfully moving lantern, which makes here and there a little luminous circle, on the edge of which hovers the livid and sinister figure of the injured and retributive husband. The story goes on, for the most part, between the lover and the husband—the tormented young Puritan minister, who carries the secret of his own lapse from pastoral purity locked up beneath an exterior that commends itself to the reverence of his flock, while he sees the softer partner of his guilt standing in the full glare of exposure and humbling herself to the misery of atonement—between this more wretched and pitiable culprit, to whom dishonor would come as a comfort and the pillory as a relief, and the older, keener, wiser man, who, to obtain satisfaction for the wrong he has suffered, devises the infernally ingenious plan of conjoining himself with his wronger, living with him, living upon him; and while he pretends to minister to his hidden ailment and to sympathize with his pain, revels in his unsuspected knowledge of these things, and stimulates them by malignant arts. The attitude of Roger Chillingworth, and the means he takes to compensate himself—these are the highly original elements in the situation that Hawthorne so ingeniously treats. None of his works are so impregnated with that aftersense of the old Puritan consciousness of life to which allusion has so often been made. If, as M. Montégut says, the qualities of his ancestors *filtered* down through generations into his composition, *The Scarlet Letter* was, as it were, the vessel that gathered up the last of the precious drops. And I say this not because the story happens to be of so-called historical cast, to be told of the early days of Massachusetts, and of people in steeple-crowned hats and sad-colored garments. The his-

torical coloring is rather weak than otherwise; there is little elaboration of detail, of the modern realism of research; and the author has made no great point of causing his figures to speak the English of their period. Nevertheless, the book is full of the moral presence of the race that invented Hester's penance—diluted and complicated with other things, but still perfectly recognizable. Puritanism, in a word, is there, not only objectively, as Hawthorne tried to place it there, but subjectively as well. Not, I mean, in his judgment of his characters in any harshness of prejudice, or in the obtrusion of a moral lesson; but in the very quality of his own vision, in the tone of the picture, in a certain coldness and exclusiveness of treatment.

The faults of the book are, to my sense, a want of reality and an abuse of the fanciful element—of a certain superficial symbolism. The people strike me not as characters, but as representatives, very picturesquely arranged, of a single state of mind; and the interest of the story lies, not in them, but in the situation, which is insistently kept before us, with little progression, though with a great deal, as I have said, of a certain stable variation; and to which they, out of their reality, contribute little that helps it to live and move. I was made to feel this want of reality, this overingenuity, of *The Scarlet Letter*, by chancing not long since upon a novel which was read fifty years ago much more than today, but which is still worth reading—the story of *Adam Blair*, by John Gibson Lockhart. This interesting and powerful little tale has a great deal of analogy with Hawthorne's novel—quite enough, at least, to suggest a comparison between them; and the comparison is a very interesting one to make, for it speedily leads us to larger considerations than simple resemblances and divergences of plot.

Adam Blair, like Arthur Dimmesdale, is a Calvinistic minister who becomes the lover of a married woman, is overwhelmed with remorse at his misdeed, and makes a public confession of it; then expiates it by resigning his pastoral office and becoming a humble tiller of the soil, as his father had been. The two stories are of about the same length, and each is the masterpiece (putting aside, of course, as far as Lockhart is concerned, the

Life of Scott) of the author. They deal alike with the manners of a rigidly theological society, and even in certain details they correspond. In each of them, between the guilty pair, there is a charming little girl; though I hasten to say that Sarah Blair (who is not the daughter of the heroine, but the legitimate offspring of the hero, a widower) is far from being as brilliant and graceful an apparition as the admirable little Pearl of *The Scarlet Letter*. The main difference between the two tales is the fact that in the American story the husband plays an all-important part, and in the Scottish plays almost none at all. *Adam Blair* is the history of the passion, and *The Scarlet Letter* the history of its sequel; but nevertheless, if one has read the two books at a short interval, it is impossible to avoid confronting them. I confess that a large portion of the interest of *Adam Blair*, to my mind, when once I had perceived that it would repeat in a great measure the situation of *The Scarlet Letter*, lay in noting its difference of tone. It threw into relief the passionless quality of Hawthorne's novel, its element of cold and ingenious fantasy, its elaborate imaginative delicacy. These things do not precisely constitute a weakness in *The Scarlet Letter*; indeed, in a certain way they constitute a great strength; but the absence of a certain something warm and straightforward, a trifle more grossly human and vulgarly natural, which one finds in *Adam Blair*, will always make Hawthorne's tale less touching to a large number of even very intelligent readers than a love story told with the robust, synthetic pathos which served Lockhart so well. His novel is not of the first rank (I should call it an excellent second-rate one), but it borrows a charm from the fact that his vigorous, but not strongly imaginative, mind was impregnated with the reality of his subject. He did not always succeed in rendering this reality; the expression is sometimes awkward and poor. But the reader feels that his vision was clear, and his feeling about the matter very strong and rich. Hawthorne's imagination, on the other hand, plays with his theme so incessantly, leads it such a dance through the moonlighted air of his intellect, that the thing cools off, as it were, hardens and stiffens, and, producing effects much more ex-

quisite, leaves the reader with a sense of having handled a splendid piece of silversmith's work. Lockhart, by means much more vulgar, produces at moments a greater illusion, and satisfies our inevitable desire for something, in the people in whom it is sought to interest us, that shall be of the same pitch and the same continuity with ourselves. Above all, it is interesting to see how the same subject appears to two men of a thoroughly different cast of mind and of a different race. Lockhart was struck with the warmth of the subject that offered itself to him, and Hawthorne with its coldness; the one with its glow, its sentimental interest—the other with its shadow, its moral interest. Lockhart's story is as decent, as severely draped, as *The Scarlet Letter*; but the author has a more vivid sense than appears to have imposed itself upon Hawthorne, of some of the incidents of the situation he describes; his tempted man and tempting woman are more actual and personal; his heroine in especial, though not in the least a delicate or a subtle conception, has a sort of credible, visible, palpable property, a vulgar roundness and relief, which are lacking to the dim and chastened image of Hester Prynne. But I am going too far; I am comparing simplicity with subtlety, the usual with the refined. Each man wrote as his turn of mind impelled him, but each expressed something more than himself. Lockhart was a dense, substantial Briton, with a taste for the concrete, and Hawthorne was a thin New Englander, with a miasmatic conscience.

In *The Scarlet Letter* there is a great deal of symbolism; there is, I think, too much. It is overdone at times, and becomes mechanical; it ceases to be impressive, and grazes triviality. The idea of the mystic *A* which the young minister finds imprinted upon his breast and eating into his flesh, in sympathy with the embroidered badge that Hester is condemned to wear, appears to me to be a case in point. This suggestion should, I think, have been just made and dropped; to insist upon it and return to it, is to exaggerate the weak side of the subject. Hawthorne returns to it constantly, plays with it, and seems charmed by it; until at last the reader feels tempted to declare that his enjoyment of it is puerile. In the admirable scene, so superbly

conceived and beautifully executed, in which Mr. Dimmesdale, in the stillness of the night, in the middle of the sleeping town, feels impelled to go and stand upon the scaffold where his mistress had formerly enacted her dreadful penance, and then, seeing Hester pass along the street, from watching at a sickbed, with little Pearl at her side, calls them both to come and stand there beside him—in this masterly episode the effect is almost spoiled by the introduction of one of these superficial conceits. What leads up to it is very fine—so fine that I cannot do better than quote it as a specimen of one of the striking pages of the book.

But before Mr. Dimmesdale had done speaking, a light gleamed far and wide over all the muffled sky. It was doubtless caused by one of those meteors which the night watcher may so often observe burning out to waste in the vacant regions of the atmosphere. So powerful was its radiance that it thoroughly illuminated the dense medium of cloud betwixt the sky and earth. The great vault brightened, like the dome of an immense lamp. It showed the familiar scene of the street with the distinctness of midday, but also with the awfulness that is always imparted to familiar objects by an unaccustomed light. The wooden houses, with their jutting stories and quaint gable peaks; the doorsteps and thresholds, with the early grass springing up about them; the garden plots, black with freshly turned earth; the wheel track, little worn, and, even in the market-place, margined with green on either side;—all were visible, but with a singularity of aspect that seemed to give another moral interpretation to the things of this world than they had ever borne before. And there stood the minister, with his hand over his heart; and Hester Prynne, with the embroidered letter glimmering on her bosom; and little Pearl, herself a symbol, and the connecting link between these two. They stood in the noon of that strange and solemn splendor, as if it were the light that is to reveal all secrets, and the daybreak that shall unite all that belong to one another.

That is imaginative, impressive, poetic; but when, almost immediately afterwards, the author goes on to say that “the minister looking upward to the zenith, beheld there the ap-

pearance of an immense letter—the letter *A*—marked out in lines of dull red light,” we feel that he goes too far, and is in danger of crossing the line that separates the sublime from its intimate neighbor. We are tempted to say that this is not moral tragedy, but physical comedy. In the same way, too much is made of the intimation that Hester’s badge had a scorching property, and that if one touched it one would immediately withdraw one’s hand. Hawthorne is perpetually looking for images which shall place themselves in picturesque correspondence with the spiritual facts with which he is concerned, and of course the search is of the very essence of poetry. But in such a process discretion is everything, and when the image becomes importunate it is in danger of seeming to stand for nothing more serious than itself. When Hester meets the minister by appointment in the forest, and sits talking with him while little Pearl wanders away and plays by the edge of the brook, the child is represented as at last making her way over to the other side of the woodland stream, and disporting herself there in a manner which makes her mother feel herself, “in some indistinct and tantalizing manner, estranged from Pearl; as if the child, in her lonely ramble through the forest, had strayed out of the sphere in which she and her mother dwelt together, and was now vainly seeking to return to it.” And Hawthorne devotes a chapter to this idea of the child’s having, by putting the brook between Hester and herself, established a kind of spiritual gulf, on the verge of which her little fantastic person innocently mocks at her mother’s sense of bereavement. This conception belongs, one would say, quite to the lighter order of a storyteller’s devices, and the reader hardly goes with Hawthorne in the large development he gives to it. He hardly goes with him either, I think, in his extreme predilection for a small number of vague ideas which are represented by such terms as “sphere” and “sympathies.” Hawthorne makes too liberal a use of these two substantives; it is the solitary defect of his style; and it counts as a defect partly because the words in question are a sort of specialty with certain writers immeasurably inferior to himself.

I had not meant, however, to expatiate upon his defects, which are of the slenderest and most venial kind. *The Scarlet Letter* has the beauty and harmony of all original and complete conceptions, and its weaker spots, whatever they are, are not of its essence; they are mere light flaws and inequalities of surface. One can often return to it; it supports familiarity, and has the inexhaustible charm and mystery of great works of art. It is admirably written. Hawthorne afterwards polished his style to a still higher degree; but in his later productions—it is almost always the case in a writer's later productions—there is a touch of mannerism. In *The Scarlet Letter* there is a high degree of polish, and at the same time a charming freshness; his phrase is less conscious of itself. His biographer very justly calls attention to the fact that his style was excellent from the beginning; that he appeared to have passed through no phase of learning how to write, but was in possession of his means, from the first, of his handling a pen. His early tales, perhaps, were not of a character to subject his faculty of expression to a very severe test; but a man who had not Hawthorne's natural sense of language would certainly have contrived to write them less well. This natural sense of language—this turn for saying things lightly and yet touchingly, picturesquely yet simply, and for infusing a gently colloquial tone into matter of the most unfamiliar import—he had evidently cultivated with great assiduity. I have spoken of the anomalous character of his *Note-Books*—of his going to such pains often to make a record of incidents which either were not worth remembering or could be easily remembered without its aid. But it helps us to understand the *Note-Books* if we regard them as a literary exercise. They were compositions, as schoolboys say, in which the subject was only the pretext, and the main point was to write a certain amount of excellent English. Hawthorne must at least have written a great many of these things for practice, and he must often have said to himself that it was better practice to write about trifles, because it was a greater tax upon one's skill to make them interesting. And his theory was just, for he has almost always made his trifles interesting. In his novels his

art of saying things well is very positively tested; for here he treats of those matters among which it is very easy for a blundering writer to go wrong—the subtleties and mysteries of life, the moral and spiritual maze. In such a passage as one I have marked for quotation from *The Scarlet Letter*, there is the stamp of the genius of style:

Hester Prynne, gazing steadfastly at the clergyman, felt a dreary influence come over her, but wherefore or whence she knew not, unless that he seemed so remote from her own sphere and utterly beyond her reach. One glance of recognition she had imagined must needs pass between them. She thought of the dim forest, with its little dell of solitude, and love, and anguish, and the mossy tree trunk, where, sitting hand in hand, they had mingled their sad and passionate talk with the melancholy murmur of the brook. How deeply had they known each other then! And was this the man? She hardly knew him now! He, moving proudly past, enveloped as it were in the rich music, with the procession of majestic and venerable fathers; he, so unattainable in his worldly position, and still more so in that far vista in his unsympathizing thoughts, through which she now beheld him! Her spirit sank with the idea that all must have been a delusion, and that vividly as she had dreamed it, there could be no real bond betwixt the clergyman and herself. And thus much of woman there was in Hester, that she could scarcely forgive him—least of all now, when the heavy footstep of their approaching fate might be heard, nearer, nearer, nearer!—for being able to withdraw himself so completely from their mutual world; while she groped darkly, and stretched forth her cold hands, and found him not!

The House of the Seven Gables was written at Lenox, among the mountains of Massachusetts, a village nestling, rather loosely, in one of the loveliest corners of New England, to which Hawthorne had betaken himself after the success of *The Scarlet Letter* became conspicuous, in the summer of 1850, and where he occupied for two years an uncomfortable little red house which is now pointed out to the inquiring stranger. The inquiring stranger is now a frequent figure at Lenox, for the place has suffered the process of lionization. It has become a

prosperous watering place, or at least (as there are no waters), as they say in America, a summer resort. It is a brilliant and generous landscape, and thirty years ago a man of fancy, desiring to apply himself, might have found both inspiration and tranquillity there. Hawthorne found so much of both that he wrote more during his two years of residence at Lenox than at any period of his career. He began with *The House of the Seven Gables*, which was finished in the early part of 1851. This is the longest of his three American novels; it is the most elaborate, and in the judgment of some persons it is the finest. It is a rich, delightful, imaginative work, larger and more various than its companions, and full of all sorts of deep intentions, of interwoven threads of suggestion. But it is not so rounded and complete as *The Scarlet Letter*; it has always seemed to me more like a prologue to a great novel than a great novel itself. I think this is partly owing to the fact that the subject, the *donnée*, as the French say, of the story, does not quite fill it out, and that we get at the same time an impression of certain complicated purposes on the author's part, which seem to reach beyond it. I call it larger and more various than its companions, and it has, indeed, a greater richness of tone and density of detail. The color, so to speak, of *The House of the Seven Gables* is admirable. But the story has a sort of expansive quality which never wholly fructifies, and as I lately laid it down, after reading it for the third time, I had a sense of having interested myself in a magnificent fragment. Yet the book has a great fascination; and of all of those of its author's productions which I have read over while writing this sketch, it is perhaps the one that has gained most by reperusal. If it be true of the others that the pure, natural quality of the imaginative strain is their great merit, this is at least as true of *The House of the Seven Gables*, the charm of which is in a peculiar degree of the kind that we fail to reduce to its grounds—like that of the sweetness of a piece of music, or the softness of fine September weather. It is vague, indefinable, ineffable; but it is the sort of thing we must always point to in justification of the high claim that we make for Hawthorne. In this case,

of course, its vagueness is a drawback, for it is difficult to point to ethereal beauties; and if the reader whom we have wished to inoculate with our admiration inform us, after looking awhile, that he perceives nothing in particular, we can only reply that, in effect, the object is a delicate one.

The House of the Seven Gables comes nearer being a picture of contemporary American life than either of its companions; but on this ground it would be a mistake to make a large claim for it. It cannot be too often repeated that Hawthorne was not a realist. He had a high sense of reality—his *Note-Books* superabundantly testify to it; and fond as he was of jotting down the items that make it up, he never attempted to render exactly or closely the actual facts of the society that surrounded him. I have said—I began by saying—that his pages were full of its spirit, and of a certain reflected light that springs from it; but I was careful to add that the reader must look for his local and national qualities between the lines of his writing and in the *indirect* testimony of his tone, his accent, his temper, of his very omissions and suppressions. *The House of the Seven Gables* has, however, more literal actuality than the others, and if it were not too fanciful an account of it, I should say that it renders, to an initiated reader, the impression of a summer afternoon in an elm-shadowed New England town. It leaves upon the mind a vague correspondence to some such reminiscence, and in stirring up the association it renders it delightful. The comparison is to the honor of the New England town, which gains in it more than it bestows. The shadows of the elms, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, are exceptionally dense and cool; the summer afternoon is peculiarly still and beautiful; the atmosphere has a delicious warmth, and the long daylight seems to pause and rest. But the mild provincial quality is there, the mixture of shabbiness and freshness, the paucity of ingredients. The end of an old race—this is the situation that Hawthorne has depicted, and he has been admirably inspired in the choice of the figures in whom he seeks to interest us. They are all figures rather than characters—they are all pictures rather than persons. But if their reality is light

and vague, it is sufficient, and it is in harmony with the low relief and dimness of outline of the objects that surrounded them. They are all types, to the author's mind, of something general, of something that is bound up with the history, at large, of families and individuals, and each of them is the center of a cluster of those ingenious and meditative musings, rather melancholy, as a general thing, than joyous, which melt into the current and texture of the story and give it a kind of moral richness. A grotesque old spinster, simple, childish, penniless, very humble at heart, but rigidly conscious of her pedigree; an amiable bachelor, of an epicurean temperament and an enfeebled intellect, who has passed twenty years of his life in penal confinement for a crime of which he was unjustly pronounced guilty; a sweet-natured and bright-faced young girl from the country, a poor relation of these two ancient decrepitudes, with whose moral mustiness her modern freshness and soundness are contrasted; a young man still more modern, holding the latest opinions, who has sought his fortune up and down the world, and, though he has not found it, takes a genial and enthusiastic view of the future: these, with two or three remarkable accessory figures, are the persons concerned in the little drama. The drama is a small one, but as Hawthorne does not put it before us for its own superficial sake, for the dry facts of the case, but for something in it which he holds to be symbolic and of large application, something that points a moral and that it behooves us to remember, the scenes in the rusty wooden house whose gables give its name to the story have something of the dignity both of history and of tragedy. Miss Hephzibah Pyncheon, dragging out a disappointed life in her paternal dwelling, finds herself obliged in her old age to open a little shop for the sale of penny toys and gingerbread. This is the central incident of the tale, and, as Hawthorne relates it, it is an incident of the most impressive magnitude and most touching interest. Her dishonored and vague-minded brother is released from prison at the same moment, and returns to the ancestral roof to deepen her perplexities. But, on the other hand, to alleviate them, and to introduce a breath of the air

of the outer world into this long unventilated interior, the little country cousin also arrives, and proves the good angel of the feebly distracted household. All this episode is exquisite—admirably conceived and executed, with a kind of humorous tenderness, an equal sense of everything in it that is picturesque, touching, ridiculous, worthy of the highest praise. Hephzibah Pyncheon, with her near-sighted scowl, her rusty joints, her antique turban, her map of a great territory to the eastward which ought to have belonged to her family, her vain terrors, and scruples, and resentments, the inaptitude and repugnance of an ancient gentlewoman to the vulgar little commerce which a cruel fate has compelled her to engage in—Hephzibah Pyncheon is a masterly picture. I repeat that she is a picture, as her companions are pictures; she is a charming piece of descriptive writing, rather than a dramatic exhibition. But she is described, like her companions, too, so subtly and lovingly that we enter into her virginal old heart and stand with her behind her abominable little counter. Clifford Pyncheon is a still more remarkable conception, though he is, perhaps, not so vividly depicted. It was a figure needing a much more subtle touch, however, and it was of the essence of his character to be vague and unemphasized. Nothing can be more charming than the manner in which the soft, bright, active presence of Phoebe Pyncheon is indicated, or than the account of her relations with the poor, dimly sentient kinsman for whom her light-handed sisterly offices, in the evening of a melancholy life, are a revelation of lost possibilities of happiness. “In her aspect,” Hawthorne says of the young girl, “there was a familiar gladness, and a holiness that you could play with, and yet reverence it as much as ever. She was like a prayer offered up in the homeliest beauty of one’s mother tongue. Fresh was Phoebe, moreover, and airy, and sweet in her apparel; as if nothing that she wore—neither her gown, nor her small straw bonnet, nor her little kerchief, any more than her snowy stockings—had ever been put on before; or, if worn, were all the fresher for it, and with a fragrance as if they had lain among the rosebuds.” Of the influence of her maidenly

salubrity upon poor Clifford, Hawthorne gives the prettiest description, and then, breaking off suddenly, renounces the attempt in language which, while pleading its inadequacy, conveys an exquisite satisfaction to the reader. I quote the passage for the sake of its extreme felicity, and of the charming image with which it concludes.

But we strive in vain to put the idea into words. No adequate expression of the beauty and profound pathos with which it impresses us is attainable. This being, made only for happiness, and heretofore so miserably failing to be happy—his tendencies so hideously thwarted that, some unknown time ago, the delicate springs of his character, never morally or intellectually strong, had given way, and he was now imbecile—this poor forlorn voyager from the Islands of the Blest, in a frail bark, on a tempestuous sea, had been flung by the last mountain wave of his shipwreck into a quiet harbor. There, as he lay more than half lifeless on the strand, the fragrance of an earthly rosebud had come to his nostrils, and, as odors will, had summoned up reminiscences or visions of all the living and breathing beauty amid which he should have had his home. With his native susceptibility of happy influences, he inhales the slight ethereal rapture into his soul, and expires!

I have not mentioned the personage in *The House of the Seven Gables* upon whom Hawthorne evidently bestowed most pains, and whose portrait is the most elaborate in the book; partly because he is, in spite of the space he occupies, an accessory figure, and partly because, even more than the others, he is what I have called a picture rather than a character. Judge Pyncheon is an ironical portrait, very richly and broadly executed, very sagaciously composed and rendered—the portrait of a superb, full-blown hypocrite, a large-based, full-nurtured Pharisee, bland, urbane, impressive, diffusing about him a “sultry” warmth of benevolence, as the author calls it again and again, and basking in the noontide of prosperity and the consideration of society; but in reality hard, gross, and ignoble. Judge Pyncheon is an elaborate piece of description, made up of a hundred admirable touches, in which satire is always

winged with fancy, and fancy is linked with a deep sense of reality. It is difficult to say whether Hawthorne followed a model in describing Judge Pyncheon; but it is tolerably obvious that the picture is an impression—a copious impression—of an individual. It has evidently a definite starting point in fact, and the author is able to draw, freely and confidently, after the image established in his mind. Holgrave, the modern young man, who has been a Jack-of-all-trades, and is at the period of the story a daguerreotypist, is an attempt to render a kind of national type—that of the young citizen of the United States whose fortune is simply in his lively intelligence, and who stands naked, as it were, unbiased and unencumbered alike, in the center of the far-stretching level of American life. Holgrave is intended as a contrast; his lack of traditions, his democratic stamp, his condensed experience, are opposed to the desiccated prejudices and exhausted vitality of the race of which poor feebly scowling, rusty-jointed Hephzibah is the most heroic representative. It is, perhaps, a pity that Hawthorne should not have proposed to himself to give the old Pyncheon qualities some embodiment which would help them to balance more fairly with the elastic properties of the young daguerreotypist—should not have painted a lusty conservative to match his strenuous radical. As it is, the mustiness and moldiness of the tenants of the House of the Seven Gables crumble away rather too easily. Evidently, however, what Hawthorne designed to represent was not the struggle between an old society and a new, for in this case he would have given the old one a better chance; but simply, as I have said, the shrinkage and extinction of a family. This appealed to his imagination; and the idea of long perpetuation and survival always appears to have filled him with a kind of horror and disapproval. Conservative, in a certain degree, as he was himself, and fond of retrospect and quietude and the mellowing influences of time, it is singular how often one encounters in his writings some expression of mistrust of old houses, old institutions, long lines of descent. He was disposed, apparently, to allow a very moderate measure in these respects, and he

condemns the dwelling of the Pyncheons to disappear from the face of the earth because it has been standing a couple of hundred years. In this he was an American of Americans; or, rather, he was more American than many of his countrymen, who, though they are accustomed to work for the short run rather than the long, have often a lurking esteem for things that show the marks of having lasted. I will add that Holgrave is one of the few figures, among those which Hawthorne created, with regard to which the absence of the realistic mode of treatment is felt as a loss. Holgrave is not sharply enough characterized; he lacks features; he is not an individual, but a type. But my last word about this admirable novel must not be a restrictive one. It is a large and generous production, pervaded with that vague hum, that indefinable echo, of the whole multitudinous life of man, which is the real sign of a great work of fiction.

After the publication of *The House of the Seven Gables*, which brought him great honor, and, I believe, a tolerable share of a more ponderable substance, he composed a couple of little volumes for children—*The Wonder-Book*, and a small collection of stories entitled *Tanglewood Tales*. They are not among his most serious literary titles, but if I may trust my own early impression of them, they are among the most charming literary services that have been rendered to children in an age (and especially in a country) in which the exactions of the infant mind have exerted much too palpable an influence upon literature. Hawthorne's stories are the old Greek myths, made more vivid to the childish imagination by an infusion of details which both deepen and explain their marvels. I have been careful not to read them over, for I should be very sorry to risk disturbing in any degree a recollection of them that has been at rest since the appreciative period of life to which they are addressed. They seem at that period enchanting, and the ideal of happiness of many American children is to lie upon the carpet and lose themselves in *The Wonder-Book*. It is in its pages that they first make the acquaintance of the heroes and heroines of the antique mythology, and something of the

nursery fairy-tale quality of interest which Hawthorne imparts to them always remains.

I have said that Lenox was a very pretty place, and that he was able to work there Hawthorne proved by composing *The House of the Seven Gables* with a good deal of rapidity. But, at the close of the year in which this novel was published, he wrote to a friend (Mr. Fields, his publisher) that,

to tell you a secret, I am sick to death of Berkshire, and hate to think of spending another winter here. . . . The air and climate do not agree with my health at all, and for the first time since I was a boy I have felt languid and dispirited. . . . O that Providence would build me the merest little shanty, and mark me out a rood or two of garden ground, near the seacoast!

He was at this time for a while out of health; and it is proper to remember that though the Massachusetts Berkshire, with its mountains and lakes, was charming during the ardent American summer, there was a reverse to the medal, consisting of December snows prolonged into April and May. Providence failed to provide him with a cottage by the sea; but he betook himself for the winter of 1852 to the little town of West Newton, near Boston, where he brought into the world *The Blithedale Romance*.

This work, as I have said, would not have been written if Hawthorne had not spent a year at Brook Farm, and though it is in no sense of the word an account of the manners or the inmates of that establishment, it will preserve the memory of the ingenious community at West Roxbury for a generation unconscious of other reminders. I hardly know what to say about it, save that it is very charming; this vague, unanalytic epithet is the first that comes to one's pen in treating of Hawthorne's novels, for their extreme amenity of form invariably suggests it; but if, on the one hand, it claims to be uttered, on the other it frankly confesses its inconclusiveness. Perhaps, however, in this case it fills out the measure of appreciation more completely than in others, for *The Blithedale Romance* is the

lightest, the brightest, the liveliest, of this company of un-humorous fictions.

The story is told from a more joyous point of view—from a point of view comparatively humorous—and a number of objects and incidents touched with the light of the profane world—the vulgar, many-colored world of actuality, as distinguished from the crepuscular realm of the writer's own reveries—are mingled with its course. The book, indeed, is a mixture of elements, and it leaves in the memory an impression analogous to that of an April day—an alternation of brightness and shadow, of broken sun patches and sprinkling clouds. Its denouement is tragical—there is, indeed, nothing so tragical in all Hawthorne, unless it be the murder of Miriam's persecutor by Donatello, in *Transformation*, as the suicide of Zenobia; and yet, on the whole, the effect of the novel is to make one think more agreeably of life. The standpoint of the narrator has the advantage of being a concrete one; he is no longer, as in the preceding tales, a disembodied spirit, imprisoned in the haunted chamber of his own contemplations, but a particular man, with a certain human grossness.

Of Miles Coverdale I have already spoken, and of its being natural to assume that, in so far as we may measure this lightly indicated identity of his, it has a great deal in common with that of his creator. Coverdale is a picture of the contemplative, observant, analytic nature, nursing its fancies, and yet, thanks to an element of strong good sense, not bringing them up to be spoiled children; having little at stake in life, at any given moment, and yet indulging, in imagination, in a good many adventures; a portrait of a man, in a word, whose passions are slender, whose imagination is active, and whose happiness lies, not in doing, but in perceiving—half a poet, half a critic, and all a spectator. He is contrasted excellently with the figure of Hollingsworth, the heavily treading Reformer, whose attitude with regard to the world is that of the hammer to the anvil, and who has no patience with his friend's indifferences and neutralities. Coverdale is a gentle skeptic, a mild cynic; he would agree that life is a little worth living—or worth living a

little; but would remark that, unfortunately, to live little enough, we have to live a great deal. He confesses to a want of earnestness, but in reality he is evidently an excellent fellow, to whom one might look, not for any personal performance on a great scale, but for a good deal of generosity of detail. "As Hollingsworth once told me, I lack a purpose," he writes, at the close of his story. "How strange! He was ruined, morally, by an overplus of the same ingredient the want of which, I occasionally suspect, has rendered my own life all an emptiness. I by no means wish to die. Yet, were there any cause in this whole chaos of human struggle worth a sane man's dying for, and which my death would benefit, then—provided, however, the effort did not involve an unreasonable amount of trouble—methinks I might be bold to offer up my life. If Kossuth, for example, would pitch the battlefield of Hungarian rights within an easy ride of my abode, and choose a mild, sunny morning, after breakfast, for the conflict, Miles Coverdale would gladly be his man for one brave rush upon the leveled bayonets. Further than that I should be loath to pledge myself."

The finest thing in *The Blithedale Romance* is the character of Zenobia, which I have said elsewhere strikes me as the nearest approach that Hawthorne has made to the complete creation of a *person*. She is more concrete than Hester or Miriam, or Hilda or Phoebe; she is a more definite image, produced by a greater multiplicity of touches. It is idle to inquire too closely whether Hawthorne had Margaret Fuller in his mind in constructing the figure of this brilliant specimen of the strong-minded class, and endowing her with the genius of conversation; or, on the assumption that such was the case, to compare the image at all strictly with the model. There is no strictness in the representation by novelists of persons who have struck them in life, and there can in the nature of things be none. From the moment the imagination takes a hand in the game, the inevitable tendency is to divergence, to following what may be called new scents. The original gives hints, but the writer does what he likes with them, and imports new elements into the picture. If there is this amount of reason for

referring the wayward heroine of Blithedale to Hawthorne's impression of the most distinguished woman of her day in Boston; that Margaret Fuller was the only literary lady of eminence whom there is any sign of his having known; that she was proud, passionate, and eloquent; that she was much connected with the little world of transcendentalism out of which the experiment of Brook Farm sprung; and that she had a miserable end and a watery grave—if these are facts to be noted on one side, I say; on the other, the beautiful and sumptuous Zenobia, with her rich and picturesque temperament and physical aspects, offers many points of divergence from the plain and strenuous invalid who represented feminine culture in the suburbs of the New England metropolis. This picturesqueness of Zenobia is very happily indicated and maintained; she is a woman in all the force of the term, and there is something very vivid and powerful in her large expression of womanly gifts and weaknesses. Hollingsworth is, I think, less successful, though there is much reality in the conception of the type to which he belongs—the strong-willed, narrow-hearted apostle of a special form of redemption for society. There is nothing better in all Hawthorne than the scene between him and Coverdale, when the two men are at work together in the field (piling stones on a dyke), and he gives it to his companion to choose whether he will be with him or against him. It is a pity, perhaps, to have represented him as having begun life as a blacksmith, for one grudges him the advantage of so logical a reason for his roughness and hardness.

Hollingsworth scarcely said a word, unless when repeatedly and pertinaciously addressed. Then, indeed, he would glare upon us from the thick shrubbery of his meditations, like a tiger out of a jungle, make the briefest reply possible, and betake himself back into the solitude of his heart and mind. . . . His heart, I imagine, was never really interested in our socialist scheme, but was forever busy with his strange and, as most people thought, impracticable plan for the reformation of criminals through an appeal to their higher instincts. Much as I liked Hollingsworth, it cost me many a groan to tolerate him

on this point. He ought to have commenced his investigation of the subject by committing some huge sin in his proper person, and examining the condition of his higher instincts afterwards.

The most touching element in the novel is the history of the grasp that this barbarous fanatic has laid upon the fastidious and high-tempered Zenobia, who, disliking him and shrinking from him at a hundred points, is drawn into the gulf of his omnivorous egotism. The portion of the story that strikes me as least felicitous is that which deals with Priscilla, and with her mysterious relation to Zenobia—with her mesmeric gifts, her clairvoyance, her identity with the Veiled Lady, her divided subjection to Hollingsworth and Westervelt, and her numerous other graceful but fantastic properties—her Sibylline attributes, as the author calls them. Hawthorne is rather too fond of Sibylline attributes—a taste of the same order as his disposition, to which I have already alluded, to talk about spheres and sympathies. As the action advances, in *The Blithedale Romance*, we get too much out of reality, and cease to feel beneath our feet the firm ground of an appeal to our own vision of the world—our observation. I should have liked to see the story concern itself more with the little community in which its earlier scenes are laid, and avail itself of so excellent an opportunity for describing unhackneyed specimens of human nature. I have already spoken of the absence of satire in the novel, of its not aiming in the least at satire, and of its offering no grounds for complaint as an invidious picture. Indeed, the brethren of Brook Farm should have held themselves slighted rather than misrepresented, and have regretted that the admirable genius who for a while was numbered among them should have treated their institution mainly as a perch for starting upon an imaginative flight. But when all is said about a certain want of substance and cohesion in the latter portions of *The Blithedale Romance*, the book is still a delightful and beautiful one. Zenobia and Hollingsworth live in the memory; and even Priscilla and Coverdale, who linger there less unfortunately, have a great deal that touches us and that we

believe in. I said just now that Priscilla was infelicitous; but immediately afterwards I open the volume at a page in which the author describes some of the out-of-door amusements at Blithedale, and speaks of a foot race across the grass, in which some of the slim young girls of the society joined.

Priscilla's peculiar charm in a foot race was the weakness and irregularity with which she ran. Growing up without exercise, except to her poor little fingers, she had never yet acquired the perfect use of her legs. Setting buoyantly forth, therefore, as if no rival less swift than Atalanta could compete with her, she ran falteringly, and often tumbled on the grass. Such an incident—though it seems too slight to think of—was a thing to laugh at, but which brought the water into one's eyes, and lingered in the memory after far greater joys and sorrows were wept out of it, as antiquated trash. Priscilla's life, as I beheld it, was full of trifles that affected me in just this way.

That seems to me exquisite, and the book is full of touches as deep and delicate.

After writing it, Hawthorne went back to live in Concord, where he had bought a small house, in which, apparently, he expected to spend a large portion of his future. This was, in fact, the dwelling in which he passed that part of the rest of his days that he spent in his own country. He established himself there before going to Europe, in 1853, and he returned to the Wayside, as he called his house, on coming back to the United States seven years later. Though he actually occupied the place no long time, he had made it his property, and it was more his own home than any of his numerous provisional abodes. I may, therefore, quote a little account of the house which he wrote to a distinguished friend, Mr. George William Curtis.

As for my old house, you will understand it better after spending a day or two in it. Before Mr. Alcott took it in hand, it was a mean-looking affair, with two peaked gables; no suggestiveness about it, and no venerableness, although from the style of its construction it seems to have survived beyond its first century. He added a porch in front, and a central peak,

and a piazza at each end, and painted it a rusty olive hue, and invested the whole with a modest picturesqueness; all which improvements, together with its situation at the foot of a wooded hill, make it a place that one notices and remembers for a few moments after passing. Mr. Alcott expended a good deal of taste and some money (to no great purpose) in forming the hillside behind the house into terraces, and building arbors and summerhouses of rough stems, and branches, and trees, on a system of his own. They must have been very pretty in their day, and are so still, although much decayed, and shattered more and more by every breeze that blows. The hillside is covered chiefly with locust trees, which come into luxuriant blossom in the month of June, and look and smell very sweetly, intermixed with a few young elms, and white pines and infant oaks—the whole forming rather a thicket than a wood. Nevertheless, there is some very good shade to be found there. I spend delectable hours there in the hottest part of the day, stretched out at my lazy length, with a book in my hand, or some unwritten book in my thoughts. There is almost always a breeze stirring along the sides or brow of the hill. From the hilltop there is a good view along the extensive level surfaces and gentle hilly outlines, covered with wood, that characterize the scenery of Concord. . . . I know nothing of the history of the house except Thoreau's telling me that it was inhabited, a century or two ago, by a man who believed he should never die. I believe, however, he is dead; at least, I hope so; else he may probably reappear and dispute my title to his residence.

As Mr. Lathrop points out, this allusion to a man who believed he should never die is "the first intimation of the story of *Septimius Felton*." The scenery of that romance, he adds, "was evidently taken from the Wayside and its hill." Septimius Felton is, in fact, a young man who, at the time of the War of the Revolution, lives in the village of Concord, on the Boston road, at the base of a woody hill which rises abruptly behind his house, and of which the level summit supplies him with a promenade continually mentioned in the course of the tale. Hawthorne used to exercise himself upon this picturesque eminence, and, as he conceived the brooding Septimius to have done before him, to betake himself thither when he found the

limits of his dwelling too narrow. But he had an advantage which his imaginary hero lacked; he erected a tower as an adjunct to the house, and it was a jocular tradition among his neighbors, in allusion to his attributive tendency to evade rather than hasten the coming guest, that he used to ascend this structure and scan the road for provocations to retreat.

In so far, however, as Hawthorne suffered the penalties of celebrity at the hands of intrusive fellow citizens, he was soon to escape from this honorable incommodity. On the 4th of March, 1853, his old college mate and intimate friend, Franklin Pierce, was installed as President of the United States. He had been the candidate of the Democratic party, and all good Democrats, accordingly, in conformity to the beautiful and rational system under which the affairs of the great Republic were carried on, began to open their windows to the golden sunshine of presidential patronage. When General Pierce was put forward by the Democrats, Hawthorne felt a perfectly loyal and natural desire that his good friend should be exalted to so brilliant a position, and he did what was in him to further the good cause, by writing a little book about its hero. His *Life of Franklin Pierce* belongs to that class of literature which is known as the "campaign biography," and which consists of an attempt, more or less successful, to persuade the many-headed monster of universal suffrage that the gentleman on whose behalf it is addressed is a paragon of wisdom and virtue. Of Hawthorne's little book there is nothing particular to say, save that it is in very good taste, that he is a very fairly ingenious advocate, and that if he claimed for the future president qualities which rather faded in the bright light of a high office, this defect of proportion was essential to his undertaking. He dwelt chiefly upon General Pierce's exploits in the war with Mexico (before that, his record, as they say in America, had been mainly that of a successful country lawyer), and exercised his descriptive powers, so far as was possible, in describing the advance of the United States troops from Vera Cruz to the city of the Montezumas. The mouthpieces of the Whig party spared him, I believe, no reprobation for "prostituting" his

exquisite genius; but I fail to see anything reprehensible in Hawthorne's lending his old friend the assistance of his graceful quill. He wished him to be president—he held afterwards that he filled the office with admirable dignity and wisdom—and, as the only thing he could do was to write, he fell to work and wrote for him. Hawthorne was a good lover and a very sufficient partisan, and I suspect that if Franklin Pierce had been made even less of the stuff of a statesman, he would still have found in the force of old associations an injunction to hail him as a ruler. Our hero was an American of the earlier and simpler type—the type of which it is doubtless premature to say that it has wholly passed away, but of which it may at least be said that the circumstances that produced it have been greatly modified. The generation to which he belonged, that generation which grew up with the century, witnessed during a period of fifty years the immense, uninterrupted material development of the young Republic; and when one thinks of the scale on which it took place, of the prosperity that walked in its train and waited on its course, of the hopes it fostered and the blessings it conferred—of the broad morning sunshine, in a word, in which it all went forward—there seems to be little room for surprise that it should have implanted a kind of superstitious faith in the grandeur of the country, its duration, its immunity from the usual troubles of earthly empires. This faith was a simple and uncritical one, enlivened with an element of genial optimism, in the light of which it appeared that the great American state was not as other human institutions are, that a special Providence watched over it, that it would go on joyously forever, and that a country whose vast and blooming bosom offered a refuge to the strugglers and seekers of all the rest of the world, must come off easily, in the battle of the ages. From this conception of the American future the sense of its having problems to solve was blissfully absent; there were no difficulties in the program, no looming complications, no rocks ahead. The indefinite multiplication of the population, and its enjoyment of the benefits of a common-school education and of unusual facilities for making an income—this

was the form in which, on the whole, the future most vividly presented itself, and in which the greatness of the country was to be recognized of men. There was, indeed, a faint shadow in the picture—the shadow projected by the “peculiar institution” of the Southern States; but it was far from sufficient to darken the rosy vision of most good Americans, and, above all, of most good Democrats. Hawthorne alludes to it in a passage of his life of Pierce, which I will quote, not only as a hint of the trouble that was in store for a cheerful race of men, but as an example of his own easy-going political attitude.

It was while in the Lower House of Congress that Franklin Pierce took that stand on the Slavery question from which he has never since swerved by a hair's breadth. He fully recognized, by his votes and his voice, the rights pledged to the South by the Constitution. This, at the period when he declared himself, was an easy thing to do. But when it became more difficult, when the first imperceptible murmur of agitation had grown almost to a convulsion, his course was still the same. Nor did he ever shun the obloquy that sometimes threatened to pursue the Northern man who dared to love that great and sacred reality—his whole united country—better than the mistiness of a philanthropic theory.

This last invidious allusion is to the disposition, not infrequent at the North, but by no means general, to set a decisive limit to further legislation in favor of the cherished idiosyncrasy of the other half of the country. Hawthorne takes the license of a sympathetic biographer in speaking of his hero's having incurred obloquy by his conservative attitude on the question of Slavery. The only class in the American world that suffered in the smallest degree, at this time, from social persecution, was the little band of Northern Abolitionists, who were as unfashionable as they were indiscreet—which is saying much. Like most of his fellow countrymen, Hawthorne had no idea that the respectable institution which he contemplated in impressive contrast to humanitarian “mistiness,” was presently to cost the nation four long years of bloodshed and misery, and a social revolution as complete as any the world has seen. When this

event occurred, he was, therefore, proportionately horrified and depressed by it; it cut from beneath his feet the familiar ground which had long felt so firm, substituting a heaving and quaking medium in which his spirit found no rest. Such was the bewildered sensation of that earlier and simpler generation of which I have spoken; their illusions were rudely dispelled, and they saw the best of all possible republics given over to fratricidal carnage. This affair had no place in their scheme, and nothing was left for them but to hang their heads and close their eyes. The subsidence of that great convulsion has left a different tone from the tone it found, and one may say that the Civil War marks an era in the history of the American mind. It introduced into the national consciousness a certain sense of proportion and relation, of the world being a more complicated place than it had hitherto seemed, the future more treacherous, success more difficult. At the rate at which things are going, it is obvious that good Americans will be more numerous than ever; but the good American, in days to come, will be a more critical person than his complacent and confident grandfather. He has eaten of the tree of knowledge. He will not, I think, be a skeptic, and still less, of course, a cynic; but he will be, without discredit to his well-known capacity for action, an observer. He will remember that the ways of the Lord are inscrutable, and that this is a world in which everything happens; and eventualities, as the late Emperor of the French used to say, will not find him intellectually unprepared. The good American of which Hawthorne was so admirable a specimen was not critical, and it was perhaps for this reason that Franklin Pierce seemed to him a very proper president.

The least that General Pierce could do in exchange for so liberal a confidence was to offer his old friend one of the numerous places in his gift. Hawthorne had a great desire to go abroad and see something of the world, so that a consulate seemed the proper thing. He never stirred in the matter himself, but his friends strongly urged that something should be done; and when he accepted the post of consul at Liverpool there was not a word of reasonable criticism to be offered on

the matter. If General Pierce, who was before all things good-natured and obliging, had been guilty of no greater indiscretion than to confer this modest distinction upon the most honorable and discreet of men of letters, he would have made a more brilliant mark in the annals of American statesmanship. Liverpool had not been immediately selected, and Hawthorne had written to his friend and publisher, Mr. Fields, with some humorous vagueness of allusion to his probable expatriation.

Do make some inquiries about Portugal; as, for instance, in what part of the world it lies, and whether it is an empire, a kingdom, or a republic. Also, and more particularly, the expenses of living there, and whether the minister would be likely to be much pestered with his own countrymen. Also, any other information about foreign countries would be acceptable to an inquiring mind.

It would seem from this that there had been a question of offering him a small diplomatic post; but the emoluments of the place were justly taken into account, and it is to be supposed that those of the consulate at Liverpool were at least as great as the salary of the American representative at Lisbon. Unfortunately, just after Hawthorne had taken possession of the former post, the salary attached to it was reduced by Congress, in an economical hour, to less than half the sum enjoyed by his predecessors. It was fixed at \$7,500 (£1,500); but the consular fees, which were often copious, were an added resource. At midsummer then, in 1853, Hawthorne was established in England.

THE ART OF FICTION*

I should not have affixed so comprehensive a title to these few remarks, necessarily wanting in any completeness upon a subject the full consideration of which would carry us far, did I not seem to discover a pretext for my temerity in the interesting pamphlet lately published under this name by Mr. Walter Besant. Mr. Besant's lecture at the Royal Institution—the original form of his pamphlet—appears to indicate that many persons are interested in the art of fiction, and are not indifferent to such remarks, as those who practice it may attempt to make about it. I am therefore anxious not to lose the benefit of this favorable association, and to edge in a few words under cover of the attention which Mr. Besant is sure to have excited. There is something very encouraging in his having put into form certain of his ideas on the mystery of storytelling.

It is a proof of life and curiosity—curiosity on the part of the brotherhood of novelists as well as on the part of their readers. Only a short time ago it might have been supposed that the English novel was not what the French call *discutable*. It had no air of having a theory, a conviction, a consciousness of itself behind it—of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison. I do not say it was necessarily the worse for that: it would take much more courage than I possess to intimate that the form of the novel as Dickens and Thackeray (for instance) saw it had any taint of incompleteness. It was, however, *naïf* (if I may help myself out with another French word); and evidently if it be destined to suffer in any way for having lost its *naïveté* it has now an idea of making sure of the corresponding advantages. During the period I have alluded to there was a comfortable, good-humored feeling abroad that a novel is a novel, as a pudding

*From *Partial Portraits*, by Henry James (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888). Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

is a pudding, and that our only business with it could be to swallow it. But within a year or two, for some reason or other, there have been signs of returning animation—the era of discussion would appear to have been to a certain extent opened. Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints; and there is a presumption that those times when no one has anything particular to say about it, and has no reason to give for practice or preference, though they may be times of honor, are not times of development—are times, possibly even, a little of dullness. The successful application of any art is a delightful spectacle, but the theory too is interesting; and though there is a great deal of the latter without the former I suspect there has never been a genuine success that has not had a latent core of conviction. Discussion, suggestion, formulation, these things are fertilizing when they are frank and sincere. Mr. Besant has set an excellent example in saying what he thinks, for his part, about the way in which fiction should be written, as well as about the way in which it should be published; for his view of the “art,” carried on into an appendix, covers that too. Other laborers in the same field will doubtless take up the argument, they will give it the light of their experience, and the effect will surely be to make our interest in the novel a little more what it had for some time threatened to fail to be—a serious, active, inquiring interest, under protection of which this delightful study may, in moments of confidence, venture to say a little more what it thinks of itself.

It must take itself seriously for the public to take it so. The old superstition about fiction being “wicked” has doubtless died out in England; but the spirit of it lingers in a certain oblique regard directed toward any story which does not more or less admit that it is only a joke. Even the most jocular novel feels in some degree the weight of the proscription that was formerly directed against literary levity: the jocularity does not always succeed in passing for orthodoxy. It is still expected, though perhaps people are ashamed to say it, that a

production which is after all only a "make-believe" (for what else is a "story"?) shall be in some degree apologetic—shall renounce the pretension of attempting really to represent life. This, of course, any sensible, wide-awake story declines to do, for it quickly perceives that the tolerance granted to it on such a condition is only an attempt to stifle it disguised in the form of generosity. The old evangelical hostility to the novel, which was as explicit as it was narrow, and which regarded it as little less favorable to our immortal part than a stage play, was in reality far less insulting. The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life. When it relinquishes this attempt, the same attempt that we see on the canvas of the painter, it will have arrived at a very strange pass. It is not expected of the picture that it will make itself humble in order to be forgiven; and the analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete. Their inspiration is the same, their process (allowing for the different quality of the vehicle) is the same, their success is the same. They may learn from each other, they may explain and sustain each other. Their cause is the same, and the honor of one is the honor of another. The Mahometans think a picture an unholy thing, but it is a long time since any Christian did, and it is therefore the more odd that in the Christian mind the traces (dissimulated though they may be) of a suspicion of the sister art should linger to this day. The only effectual way to lay it to rest is to emphasize the analogy to which I just alluded—to insist on the fact that as the picture is reality, so the novel is history. That is the only general description (which does it justice) that we may give of the novel. But history also is allowed to represent life; it is not, any more than painting, expected to apologize. The subject matter of fiction is stored up likewise in documents and records, and if it will not give itself away, as they say in California, it must speak with assurance, with the tone of the historian. Certain accomplished novelists have a habit of giving themselves away which must often bring tears to the eyes of people who take their fiction seriously. I was lately struck,

in reading over many pages of Anthony Trollope, with his want of discretion in this particular. In a digression, a parenthesis, or an aside, he concedes to the reader that he and this trusting friend are only "making believe." He admits that the events he narrates have not really happened, and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. Such a betrayal of a sacred office seems to me, I confess, a terrible crime; it is what I mean by the attitude of apology, and it shocks me every whit as much in Trollope as it would have shocked me in Gibbon or Macaulay. It implies that the novelist is less occupied in looking for the truth (the truth, of course I mean, that he assumes, the premises that we must grant him, whatever they may be) than the historian, and in doing so it deprives him at a stroke of all his standing room. To represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men, is the task of either writer, and the only difference that I can see is, in proportion as he succeeds, to the honor of the novelist, consisting as it does in his having more difficulty in collecting his evidence, which is so far from being purely literary. It seems to me to give him a great character, the fact that he has at once so much in common with the philosopher and the painter; this double analogy is a magnificent heritage.

It is of all this evidently that Mr. Besant is full when he insists upon the fact that fiction is one of the *fine arts*, deserving in its turn of all the honors and emoluments that have hitherto been reserved for the successful profession of music, poetry, painting, architecture. It is impossible to insist too much on so important a truth, and the place that Mr. Besant demands for the work of the novelist may be represented, a trifle less abstractly, by saying that he demands not only that it shall be reputed artistic, but that it shall be reputed very artistic indeed. It is excellent that he should have struck this note, for his doing so indicates that there was need of it, that his proposition may be to many people a novelty. One rubs one's eyes at the thought; but the rest of Mr. Besant's essay confirms the revelation. I suspect in truth that it would be possible to confirm it still further, and that one would not be far wrong in saying

that in addition to the people to whom it has never occurred that a novel ought to be artistic, there are a great many others who, if this principle were urged upon them, would be filled with an indefinable mistrust. They would find it difficult to explain their repugnance, but it would operate strongly to put them on their guard. "Art," in our Protestant communities, where so many things have got so strangely twisted about, is supposed in certain circles to have some vaguely injurious effect upon those who make it an important consideration, who let it weigh in the balance. It is assumed to be opposed in some mysterious manner to morality, to amusement, to instruction. When it is embodied in the work of the painter (the sculptor is another affair!) you know what it is: it stands there before you, in the honesty of pink and green and a gilt frame; you can see the worst of it at a glance, and you can be on your guard. But when it is introduced into literature it becomes more insidious—there is danger of its hurting you before you know it. Literature should be either instructive or amusing, and there is in many minds an impression that these artistic preoccupations, the search for form, contribute to neither end, interfere indeed with both. They are too frivolous to be edifying, and too serious to be diverting; and they are moreover priggish and paradoxical and superfluous. That, I think, represents the manner in which the latent thought of many people who read novels as an exercise in skipping would explain itself if it were to become articulate. They would argue, of course, that a novel ought to be "good," but they would interpret this term in a fashion of their own, which indeed would vary considerably from one critic to another. One would say that being good means representing virtuous and aspiring characters, placed in prominent positions; another would say that it depends on a "happy ending," on a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs, and cheerful remarks. Another still would say that it means being full of incident and movement, so that we shall wish to jump ahead, to see who was the mysterious stranger, and if the stolen will was ever found, and shall not be distracted

from this pleasure by any tiresome analysis or "description." But they would all agree that the "artistic" idea would spoil some of their fun. One would hold it accountable for all the description, another would see it revealed in the absence of sympathy. Its hostility to a happy ending would be evident, and it might even in some cases render any ending at all impossible. The "ending" of a novel is, for many persons, like that of a good dinner, a course of dessert and ices, and the artist in fiction is regarded as a sort of meddlesome doctor who forbids agreeable aftertastes. It is therefore true that this conception of Mr. Besant's of the novel as a superior form encounters not only a negative but a positive indifference. It matters little that as a work of art it should really be as little or as much of its essence to supply happy endings, sympathetic characters, and an objective tone, as if it were a work of mechanics: the association of ideas, however incongruous, might easily be too much for it if an eloquent voice were not sometimes raised to call attention to the fact that it is at once as free and as serious a branch of literature as any other.

Certainly this might sometimes be doubted in presence of the enormous number of works of fiction that appeal to the credulity of our generation, for it might easily seem that there could be no great character in a commodity so quickly and easily produced. It must be admitted that good novels are much compromised by bad ones, and that the field at large suffers discredit from overcrowding. I think, however, that this injury is only superficial, and that the superabundance of written fiction proves nothing against the principle itself. It has been vulgarized, like all other kinds of literature, like everything else today, and it has proved more than some kinds accessible to vulgarization. But there is as much difference as there ever was between a good novel and a bad one: the bad is swept with all the daubed canvases and spoiled marble into some unvisited limbo, or infinite rubbish yard beneath the back windows of the world, and the good subsists and emits its light and stimulates our desire for perfection. As I shall take the liberty of making but a single criticism of Mr. Besant, whose

tone is so full of the love of his art, I may as well have done with it at once. He seems to me to mistake in attempting to say so definitely beforehand what sort of an affair the good novel will be. To indicate the danger of such an error as that has been the purpose of these few pages; to suggest that certain traditions on the subject, applied *apriori*, have already had much to answer for, and that the good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free. It lives upon exercise, and the very meaning of exercise is freedom. The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting. That general responsibility rests upon it, but it is the only one I can think of. The ways in which it is at liberty to accomplish this result (of interesting us) strike me as innumerable, and such as can only suffer from being marked out or fenced in by prescription. They are as various as the temperament of man, and they are successful in proportion as they reveal a particular mind, different from others. A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life: that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression. But there will be no intensity at all, and therefore no value, unless there is freedom to feel and say. The tracing of a line to be followed, of a tone to be taken, of a form to be filled out, is a limitation of that freedom and a suppression of the very thing that we are most curious about. The form, it seems to me, is to be appreciated after the fact: then the author's choice has been made, his standard has been indicated; then we can follow lines and directions and compare tones and resemblances. Then in a word we can enjoy one of the most charming of pleasures, we can estimate quality, we can apply the test of execution. The execution belongs to the author alone; it is what is most personal to him, and we measure him by that. The advantage, the luxury, as well as the torment and responsibility of the novelist, is that there is no limit to what he may attempt as an executant—no limit to his possible experiments, efforts, discoveries, successes.

Here it is especially that he works, step by step, like his brother of the brush, of whom we may always say that he has painted his picture in a manner best known to himself. His manner is his secret, not necessarily a jealous one. He cannot disclose it as a general thing if he would; he would be at a loss to teach it to others. I say this with a due recollection of having insisted on the community of method of the artist who paints a picture and the artist who writes a novel. The painter *is* able to teach the rudiments of his practice, and it is possible, from the study of good work (granted the aptitude), both to learn how to paint and to learn how to write. Yet it remains true, without injury to the *rapprochement*, that the literary artist would be obliged to say to his pupil much more than the other, "Ah, well, you must do it as you can!" It is a question of degree, a matter of delicacy. If there are exact sciences, there are also exact arts, and the grammar of painting is so much more definite that it makes the difference.

I ought to add, however, that, if Mr. Besant says at the beginning of his essay that the "laws of fiction may be laid down and taught with as much precision and exactness as the laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion," he mitigates what might appear to be an extravagance by applying his remark to "general" laws, and by expressing most of these rules in a manner with which it would certainly be unaccommodating to disagree. That the novelist must write from his experience, that his "characters must be real and such as might be met with in actual life"; that "a young lady brought up in a quiet country village should avoid descriptions of garrison life," and "a writer whose friends and personal experiences belong to the lower middle class should carefully avoid introducing his characters into society"; that one should enter one's notes in a commonplace book; that one's figures should be clear in outline; that making them clear by some trick of speech or of carriage is a bad method, and "describing them at length" is a worse one; that English fiction should have a "conscious moral purpose"; that "it is almost impossible to estimate too highly the value of careful workmanship—that is, of style"; that "the most

important point of all is the story," that "the story is everything": these are principles with most of which it is surely impossible not to sympathize. That remark about the lower middle-class writer and his knowing his place is perhaps rather chilling; but for the rest I should find it difficult to dissent from any one of these recommendations. At the same time, I should find it difficult positively to assent to them, with the exception, perhaps, of the injunction as to entering one's notes in a commonplace book. They scarcely seem to me to have the quality that Mr. Besant attributes to the rules of the novelist—the "precision and exactness" of "the laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion." They are suggestive, they are even inspiring, but they are not exact, though they are doubtless as much so as the case admits of: which is a proof of that liberty of interpretation for which I just contended. For the value of these different injunctions—so beautiful and so vague—is wholly in the meaning one attaches to them. The characters, the situation, which strike one as real will be those that touch and interest one most, but the measure of reality is very difficult to fix. The reality of Don Quixote or of Mr. Micawber is a very delicate shade; it is a reality so colored by the author's vision that, vivid as it may be, one would hesitate to propose it as a model: one would expose oneself to some very embarrassing questions on the part of a pupil. It goes without saying that you will not write a good novel unless you possess the sense of reality; but it will be difficult to give you a recipe for calling that sense into being. Humanity is immense, and reality has a myriad forms; the most one can affirm is that some of the flowers of fiction have the odor of it, and others have not; as for telling you in advance how your nosegay should be composed, that is another affair. It is equally excellent and inconclusive to say that one must write from experience; to our supposititious aspirant such a declaration might savor of mockery. What kind of experience is intended, and where does it begin and end? Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness,

and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative—much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius—it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations. The young lady living in a village has only to be a damsel upon whom nothing is lost to make it quite unfair (as it seems to me) to declare to her that she shall have nothing to say about the military. Greater miracles have been seen than that, imagination assisting, she should speak the truth about some of these gentlemen. I remember an English novelist, a woman of genius, telling me that she was much commended for the impression she had managed to give in one of her tales of the nature and way of life of the French Protestant youth. She had been asked where she learned so much about this recondite being, she had been congratulated on her peculiar opportunities. These opportunities consisted in her having once, in Paris, as she ascended a staircase, passed an open door where, in the household of a *pasteur*, some of the young Protestants were seated at table round a finished meal. The glimpse made a picture; it lasted only a moment, but that moment was experience. She had got her direct personal impression, and she turned out her type. She knew what youth was, and what Protestantism; she also had the advantage of having seen what it was to be French, so that she converted these ideas into a concrete image and produced a reality. Above all, however, she was blessed with the faculty which when you give it an inch takes an ell, and which for the artist is a much greater source of strength than any accident of residence or of place in the social *scalé*. The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it—this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience, and they occur in country and in town, and in the most differing stages of education. If experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions *are* experience, just as (have we not seen it?) they are the very air we breathe. There-

fore, if I should certainly say to a novice, "Write from experience and experience only," I should feel that this was rather a tantalizing monition if I were not careful immediately to add, "Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!"

I am far from intending by this to minimize the importance of exactness—of truth of detail. One can speak best from one's own taste, and I may therefore venture to say that the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel—the merit on which all its other merits (including that conscious moral purpose of which Mr. Besant speaks) helplessly and submissively depend. If it be not there, they are all as nothing, and if these be there, they owe their effect to the success with which the author has produced the illusion of life. The cultivation of this success, the study of this exquisite process, form, to my taste, the beginning and the end of the art of the novelist. They are his inspiration, his despair, his reward, his torment, his delight. It is here in very truth that he competes with life; it is here that he competes with his brother the painter in *his* attempt to render the look of things, the look that conveys their meaning, to catch the color, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of the human spectacle. It is in regard to this that Mr. Besant is well inspired when he bids him take notes. He cannot possibly take too many, he cannot possibly take enough. All life solicits him, and to "render" the simplest surface, to produce the most momentary illusion, is a very complicated business. His case would be easier, and the rule would be more exact, if Mr. Besant had been able to tell him what notes to take. But this, I fear, he can never learn in any manual; it is the business of his life. He has to take a great many in order to select a few, he has to work them up as he can, and even the guides and philosophers who might have most to say to him must leave him alone when it comes to the application of precepts, as we leave the painter in communion with his palette. That his characters "must be clear in outline," as Mr. Besant says—he feels that down to his boots; but how he shall make them so is a secret between his good angel and himself. It would be absurdly simple if he could be taught

that a great deal of "description" would make them so, or that on the contrary the absence of description and the cultivation of dialogue, or the absence of dialogue and the multiplication of "incident," would rescue him from his difficulties. Nothing, for instance, is more possible than that he be of a turn of mind for which this odd, literal opposition of description and dialogue, incident and description, has little meaning and light. People often talk of these things as if they had a kind of inter-necine distinctness, instead of melting into each other at every breath, and being intimately associated parts of one general effort of expression. I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive, in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of description that is not in its intention narrative, a passage of dialogue that is not in its intention descriptive, a touch of truth of any sort that does not partake of the nature of incident, or an incident that derives its interest from any other source than the general and only source of the success of a work of art—that of being illustrative. A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts. The critic who over the close texture of a finished work shall pretend to trace a geography of items will mark some frontiers as artificial, I fear, as any that have been known to history. There is an old-fashioned distinction between the novel of character and the novel of incident which must have cost many a smile to the intending fabulist who was keen about his work. It appears to me as little to the point as the equally celebrated distinction between the novel and the romance—to answer as little to any reality. There are bad novels and good novels, as there are bad pictures and good pictures; but that is the only distinction in which I see any meaning, and I can as little imagine speaking of a novel of character as I can imagine speaking of a picture of character. When one says picture one says of character, when one says novel one says of incident, and the terms may be transposed at will. What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is

either a picture or a novel that is *not* of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is an expression of character. If you say you don't see it (character in *that—allons donc!*), this is exactly what the artist who has reasons of his own for thinking he *does* see it undertakes to show you. When a young man makes up his mind that he has not faith enough after all to enter the church as he intended, that is an incident, though you may not hurry to the end of the chapter to see whether perhaps he doesn't change once more. I do not say that these are extraordinary or startling incidents. I do not pretend to estimate the degree of interest proceeding from them, for this will depend upon the skill of the painter. It sounds almost puerile to say that some incidents are intrinsically much more important than others, and I need not take this precaution after having professed my sympathy for the major ones in remarking that the only classification of the novel that I can understand is into that which has life and that which has it not.

The novel and the romance, the novel of incident and that of character—these clumsy separations appear to me to have been made by critics and readers for their own convenience, and to help them out of some of their occasional queer predicaments, but to have little reality or interest for the producer, from whose point of view it is of course that we are attempting to consider the art of fiction. The case is the same with another shadowy category which Mr. Besant apparently is disposed to set up—that of the “modern English novel”; unless indeed it be that in this matter he has fallen into an accidental confusion of stand-points. It is not quite clear whether he intends the remarks in which he alludes to it to be didactic or historical. It is as difficult to suppose a person intending to write a modern English as to suppose him writing an ancient English novel: that is a label which begs the question. One writes the novel, one paints the picture, of one's language and of one's time, and calling it modern English will not, alas! make the difficult task any easier.

No more, unfortunately, will calling this or that work of one's fellow artist a romance—unless it be, of course, simply for the pleasantness of the thing, as for instance when Hawthorne gave this heading to his story of *Blithedale*. The French, who have brought the theory of fiction to remarkable completeness, have but one name for the novel, and have not attempted smaller things in it, that I can see, for that. I can think of no obligation to which the "romancer" would not be held equally with the novelist; the standard of execution is equally high for each. Of course it is of execution that we are talking—that being the only point of a novel that is open to contention. This is perhaps too often lost sight of, only to produce interminable confusions and cross purposes. We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his *donnée*: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it. Naturally I do not mean that we are bound to like it or find it interesting: in case we do not, our course is perfectly simple—to let it alone. We believe that of a certain idea even the most sincere novelist can make nothing at all, and the event may perfectly justify our belief; but the failure will have been a failure to execute, and it is in the execution that the fatal weakness is recorded. If we pretend to respect the artist at all, we must allow him his freedom of choice, in the face, in particular cases, of innumerable presumptions that the choice will not fructify. Art derives a considerable part of its beneficial exercise from flying in the face of presumptions, and some of the most interesting experiments of which it is capable are hidden in the bosom of common things. Gustave Flaubert has written a story about the devotion of a servant girl to a parrot, and the production, highly finished as it is, cannot on the whole be called a success. We are perfectly free to find it flat, but I think it might have been interesting; and I, for my part, am extremely glad he should have written it; it is a contribution to our knowledge of what can be done—or what cannot. Ivan Turgenev has written a tale about a deaf-and-dumb serf and a lap dog, and the thing is touching, loving, a little masterpiece. He struck the note of life where Gustave Flaubert missed it—he flew in the face of a presumption and achieved a victory.

Nothing, of course, will ever take the place of the good old fashion of "liking" a work of art or not liking it: the most improved criticism will not abolish that primitive, that ultimate test. I mention this to guard myself from the accusation of intimating that the idea, the subject, of a novel or a picture, does not matter. It matters, to my sense, in the highest degree, and if I might put up a prayer it would be that artists should select none but the richest. Some, as I have already hastened to admit, are much more remunerative than others, and it would be a world happily arranged in which persons intending to treat them should be exempt from confusions and mistakes. This fortunate condition will arrive only, I fear, on the same day that critics become purged from error. Meanwhile, I repeat, we do not judge the artist with fairness unless we say to him, "Oh, I grant you your starting point, because if I did not I should seem to prescribe to you, and heaven forbid I should take that responsibility. If I pretend to tell you what you must not take, you will call upon me to tell you then what you must take; in which case I shall be prettily caught. Moreover, it isn't till I have accepted your data that I can begin to measure you. I have the standard, the pitch; I have no right to tamper with your flute and then criticize your music. Of course I may not care for your idea at all; I may think it silly, or stale, or unclean; in which case I wash my hands of you altogether. I may content myself with believing that you will not have succeeded in being interesting, but I shall, of course, not attempt to demonstrate it, and you will be as indifferent to me as I am to you. I needn't remind you that there are all sorts of tastes: who can know it better? Some people, for excellent reasons, don't like to read about carpenters; others, for reasons even better, don't like to read about courtesans. Many object to Americans. Others (I believe they are mainly editors and publishers) won't look at Italians. Some readers don't like quiet subjects; others don't like bustling ones. Some enjoy a complete illusion, others the consciousness of large concessions. They choose their novels accordingly, and if they don't care about your idea they won't, a fortiori, care about your treatment."

So that it comes back very quickly, as I have said, to the liking: in spite of M. Zola, who reasons less powerfully than he represents, and who will not reconcile himself to this absoluteness of taste, thinking that there are certain things that people ought to like, and that they can be made to like. I am quite at a loss to imagine anything (at any rate in this matter of fiction) that people *ought* to like or to dislike. Selection will be sure to take care of itself, for it has a constant motive behind it. That motive is simply experience. As people feel life, so they will feel the art that is most closely related to it. This closeness of relation is what we should never forget in talking of the effort of the novel. Many people speak of it as a factitious, artificial form, a product of ingenuity, the business of which is to alter and arrange the things that surround us, to translate them into conventional, traditional molds. This, however, is a view of the matter which carries us but a very short way, condemns the art to an eternal repetition of a few familiar clichés, cuts short its development, and leads us straight up to a dead wall. Catching the very note and trick, the strange irregular rhythm of life, that is the attempt whose strenuous force keeps Fiction upon her feet. In proportion as in what she offers us we see life *without* rearrangement do we feel that we are touching the truth; in proportion as we see it *with* rearrangement do we feel that we are being put off with a substitute, a compromise and convention. It is not uncommon to hear an extraordinary assurance of remark in regard to this matter of rearranging, which is often spoken of as if it were the last word of art. Mr. Besant seems to me in danger of falling into the great error with his rather unguarded talk about "selection." Art is essentially selection, but it is a selection whose main care is to be typical, to be inclusive. For many people art means rose-colored window-panes, and selection means picking a bouquet for Mrs. Grundy. They will tell you glibly that artistic considerations have nothing to do with the disagreeable, with the ugly; they will rattle off shallow commonplaces about the province of art and the limits of art till you are moved to some wonder in return as to the province and the limits of ignorance. It appears to me that

no one can ever have made a seriously artistic attempt without becoming conscious of an immense increase—a kind of revelation—of freedom. One perceives in that case—by the light of a heavenly ray—that the province of art is all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision. As Mr. Besant so justly intimates, it is all experience. That is a sufficient answer to those who maintain that it must not touch the sad things of life, who stick into its divine unconscious bosom little prohibitory inscriptions on the end of sticks, such as we see in public gardens—"It is forbidden to walk on the grass; it is forbidden to touch the flowers; it is not allowed to introduce dogs or to remain after dark; it is requested to keep to the right." The young aspirant in the line of fiction whom we continue to imagine will do nothing without taste, for in that case his freedom would be of little use to him; but the first advantage of his taste will be to reveal to him the absurdity of the little sticks and tickets. If he have taste, I must add, of course he will have ingenuity, and my disrespectful reference to that quality just now was not meant to imply that it is useless in fiction. But it is only a secondary aid; the first is a capacity for receiving straight impressions.

Mr. Besant has some remarks on the question of "the story" which I shall not attempt to criticize, though they seem to me to contain a singular ambiguity, because I do not think I understand them. I cannot see what is meant by talking as if there were a part of a novel which is the story and part of it which for mystical reasons is not—unless indeed the distinction be made in a sense in which it is difficult to suppose that anyone should attempt to convey anything. "The story," if it represents anything, represents the subject, the idea, the *donnée* of the novel; and there is surely no "school"—Mr. Besant speaks of a school—which urges that a novel should be all treatment and no subject. There must assuredly be something to treat; every school is intimately conscious of that. This sense of the story being the idea, the starting point, of the novel, is the only one that I see in which it can be spoken of as something different from its organic whole; and since in proportion as the work is successful the idea permeates and penetrates it, informs and animates it,

so that every word and every punctuation point contribute directly to the expression, in that proportion do we lose our sense of the story being a blade which may be drawn more or less out of its sheath. The story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the needle and thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of the thread without the needle, or the needle without the thread. Mr. Besant is not the only critic who may be observed to have spoken as if there were certain things in life which constitute stories, and certain others which do not. I find the same odd implication in an entertaining article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, devoted, as it happens, to Mr. Besant's lecture. "The story is the thing!" says this graceful writer, as if with a tone of opposition to some other idea. I should think it was, as every painter who, as the time for "sending in" his picture looms in the distance, finds himself still in quest of a subject—as every belated artist not fixed about his theme will heartily agree. There are some subjects which speak to us and others which do not, but he would be a clever man who should undertake to give a rule—an index expurgatorius—by which the story and the no-story should be known apart. It is impossible (to me at least) to imagine any such rule which shall not be altogether arbitrary. The writer in the *Pall Mall* opposes the delightful (as I suppose) novel of *Margot la Balafrée* to certain tales in which "Bostonian nymphs" appear to have "rejected English dukes for psychological reasons." I am not acquainted with the romance just designated, and can scarcely forgive the *Pall Mall* critic for not mentioning the name of the author, but the title appears to refer to a lady who may have received a scar in some heroic adventure. I am inconsolable at not being acquainted with this episode, but am utterly at a loss to see why it is a story when the rejection (or acceptance) of a duke is not, and why a reason, psychological or other, is not a subject when a cicatrix is. They are all particles of the multitudinous life with which the novel deals, and surely no dogma which pretends to make it lawful to touch the one and unlawful to touch the other will stand for a moment on its feet. It is the special picture that must stand or fall, according

as it seem to possess truth or to lack it. Mr. Besant does not, to my sense, light up the subject by intimating that a story must, under penalty of not being a story, consist of "adventures." Why of adventures more than of green spectacles? He mentions a category of impossible things, and among them he places "fiction without adventure." Why without adventure, more than without matrimony, or celibacy, or parturition, or cholera, or hydropathy, or Jansenism? This seems to me to bring the novel back to the hapless little role of being an artificial, ingenious thing—bring it down from its large, free character of an immense and exquisite correspondence with life. And what *is* adventure, when it comes to that, and by what sign is the listening pupil to recognize it? It is an adventure—an immense one—for me to write this little article; and for a Bostonian nymph to reject an English duke is an adventure only less stirring, I should say, than for an English duke to be rejected by a Bostonian nymph. I see dramas within dramas in that, and innumerable points of view. A psychological reason is, to my imagination, an object adorably pictorial; to catch the tint of its complexion—I feel as if that idea might inspire one to Titianesque efforts. There are few things more exciting to me, in short, than a psychological reason, and yet, I protest, the novel seems to me the most magnificent form of art. I have just been reading, at the same time, the delightful story of *Treasure Island*, by Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson and, in a manner less consecutive, the last tale from M. Edmond de Goncourt, which is entitled *Chérie*. One of these works treats of murders, mysteries, islands of dreadful renown, hairbreadth escapes, miraculous coincidences and buried doubloons. The other treats of a little French girl who lived in a fine house in Paris, and died of wounded sensibility because no one would marry her. I call *Treasure Island* delightful because it appears to me to have succeeded wonderfully in what it attempts; and I venture to bestow no epithet upon *Chérie*, which strikes me as having failed deplorably in what it attempts—that is, in tracing the development of the moral consciousness of a child. But one of these productions strikes me as exactly as much of a novel as the

other, and as having a "story" quite as much. The moral consciousness of a child is as much a part of life as the islands of the Spanish Main, and the one sort of geography seems to me to have those "surprises" of which Mr. Besant speaks quite as much as the other. For myself (since it comes back in the last resort, as I say, to the preference of the individual), the picture of the child's experience has the advantage that I can at successive steps (an immense luxury, near to the "sensual pleasure" of which Mr. Besant's critic in the *Pall Mall* speaks) say Yes or No, as it may be, to what the artist puts before me. I have been a child in fact, but I have been on a quest for a buried treasure only in supposition, and it is a simple accident that with M. de Goncourt I should have for the most part to say No. With George Eliot, when she painted that country with a far other intelligence, I always said Yes.

The most interesting part of Mr. Besant's lecture is unfortunately the briefest passage—his very cursory allusion to the "conscious moral purpose" of the novel. Here again it is not very clear whether he be recording a fact or laying down a principle; it is a great pity that in the latter case he should not have developed his idea. This branch of the subject is of immense importance, and Mr. Besant's few words point to considerations of the widest reach, not to be lightly disposed of. He will have treated the art of fiction but superficially who is not prepared to go every inch of the way that these considerations will carry him. It is for this reason that at the beginning of these remarks I was careful to notify the reader that my reflections on so large a theme have no pretension to be exhaustive. Like Mr. Besant, I have left the question of the morality of the novel till the last, and at the last I find I have used up my space. It is a question surrounded with difficulties, as witness the very first that meets us, in the form of a definite question, on the threshold. Vagueness, in such a discussion, is fatal, and what is the meaning of your morality and your conscious moral purpose? Will you not define your terms and explain how (a novel being a picture) a picture can be either moral or immoral? You wish to paint a moral picture or carve a moral statue: will you not tell us how

you would set about it? We are discussing the Art of Fiction; questions of art are questions (in the widest sense) of execution; questions of morality are quite another affair, and will you not let us see how it is that you find it so easy to mix them up? These things are so clear to Mr. Besant that he has deduced from them a law which he sees embodied in English fiction, and which is "a truly admirable thing and a great cause for congratulation." It is a great cause for congratulation indeed when such thorny problems become as smooth as silk. I may add that in so far as Mr. Besant perceives that in point of fact English fiction has addressed itself preponderantly to these delicate questions he will appear to many people to have made a vain discovery. They will have been positively struck, on the contrary, with the moral timidity of the usual English novelist; with his (or with her) aversion to face the difficulties with which on every side the treatment of reality bristles. He is apt to be extremely shy (whereas the picture that Mr. Besant draws is a picture of boldness), and the sign of his work, for the most part, is a cautious silence on certain subjects. In the English novel (by which of course I mean the American as well), more than in any other, there is a traditional difference between that which people know and that which they agree to admit that they know, that which they see and that which they speak of, that which they feel to be a part of life and that which they allow to enter into literature. There is the great difference, in short, between what they talk of in conversation and what they talk of in print. The essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field, and I should directly reverse Mr. Besant's remark and say not that the English novel has a purpose, but that it has a diffidence. To what degree a purpose in a work of art is a source of corruption I shall not attempt to inquire; the one that seems to me least dangerous is the purpose of making a perfect work. As for our novel, I may say lastly on this score that as we find it in England today it strikes me as addressed in a large degree to "young people," and that this in itself constitutes a presumption that it will be rather shy. There are certain things which it is generally agreed not to discuss, not even to mention, before young people. That

is very well, but the absence of discussion is not a symptom of the moral passion. The purpose of the English novel—"a truly admirable thing, and a great cause for congratulation"—strikes me therefore as rather negative.

There is one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; that is, in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer. In proportion as that intelligence is fine will the novel, the picture, the statue partake of the substance of beauty and truth. To be constituted of such elements is, to my vision, to have purpose enough. No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind; that seems to me an axiom which, for the artist in fiction, will cover all needful moral ground: if the youthful aspirant take it to heart it will illuminate for him many of the mysteries of "purpose." There are many other useful things that might be said to him, but I have come to the end of my article, and can only touch them as I pass. The critic in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, whom I have already quoted, draws attention to the danger, in speaking of the art of fiction, of generalizing. The danger that he has in mind is rather, I imagine, that of particularizing, for there are some comprehensive remarks which, in addition to those embodied in Mr. Besant's suggestive lecture, might without fear of misleading him be addressed to the ingenuous student. I should remind him first of the magnificence of the form that is open to him, which offers to sight so few restrictions and such innumerable opportunities. The other arts, in comparison, appear confined and hampered; the various conditions under which they are exercised are so rigid and definite. But the only condition that I can think of attaching to the composition of the novel is, as I have already said, that it be sincere. This freedom is a splendid privilege, and the first lesson of the young novelist is to learn to be worthy of it. "Enjoy it as it deserves," I should say to him; "take possession of it, explore it to its utmost extent, publish it, rejoice in it. All life belongs to you, and do not listen either to those who would shut you up into corners of it and tell you that it is only here and there that art inhabits,

or to those who would persuade you that this heavenly messenger wings her way outside of life altogether, breathing a superfine air, and turning away her head from the truth of things. There is no impression of life, no manner of seeing it and feeling it, to which the plan of the novelist may not offer a place; you have only to remember that talents so dissimilar as those of Alexandre Dumas and Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Gustave Flaubert have worked in this field with equal glory. Do not think too much about optimism and pessimism; try and catch the color of life itself. In France today we see a prodigious effort (that of Émile Zola, to whose solid and serious work no explorer of the capacity of the novel can allude without respect), we see an extraordinary effort vitiated by a spirit of pessimism on a narrow basis. M. Zola is magnificent, but he strikes an English reader as ignorant; he has an air of working in the dark; if he had as much light as energy, his results would be of the highest value. As for the aberrations of a shallow optimism, the ground (of English fiction especially) is strewn with their brittle particles as with broken glass. If you must indulge in conclusions, let them have the taste of a wide knowledge. Remember that your first duty is to be as complete as possible—to make as perfect a work. Be generous and delicate and pursue the prize.”

THE LIFE OF GEORGE ELIOT*

The writer of these pages has observed that the first question usually asked in relation to Mr. Cross's long-expected biography is whether the reader has not been disappointed in it. The inquirer is apt to be disappointed if the question be answered in the negative. It may as well be said, therefore, at the threshold of the following remarks, that such is not the feeling with which this particular reader laid down the book. The general feeling about it will depend very much on what has been looked for; there was probably, in advance, a considerable belief that we were to be treated to "revelations." I know not exactly why it should have been, but certain it is that the announcement of a biography of George Eliot has been construed more or less as a promise that we were to be admitted behind the scenes, as it were, of her life. No such result has taken place. We look at the drama from the point of view usually allotted to the public, and the curtain is lowered whenever it suits the biographer. The most "intimate" pages in the book are those in which the great novelist notes her derangements of health and depression of spirits. This history, to my sense, is quite as interesting as it might have been; that is, it is of the deepest interest, and one misses nothing that is characteristic or essential except perhaps a few more examples of the *vis comica* which made half the fortune of *Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner*. There is little that is absent that it would have been in Mr. Cross's power to give us. George Eliot's letters and journals are only a partial expression of her spirit, but they are evidently as full an expression as it was capable of giving itself when she was not wound up to the epic pitch. They do not explain her novels; they reflect in a singularly limited degree the process of growth of these great works; but it must be added that even a superficial acquaintance with

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the author was sufficient to assure one that her rich and complicated mind did not overflow in idle confidences. It was benignant and receptive in the highest degree, and nothing could have been more gracious than the manner of its intercourse; but it was deeply reserved and very far from egotistical, and nothing could have been less easy or agreeable to it, I surmise, than to attempt to tell people how, for instance, the plot of *Romola* got itself constructed or the character of Grandcourt got itself observed. There are critics who refuse to the delineator of this gentleman the title of a genius; who say that she had only a great talent overloaded with a great store of knowledge. The label, the epithet, matters little, but it is certain that George Eliot had this characteristic of the mind *possessed*: that the creations which brought her renown were of the incalculable kind, shaped themselves in mystery, in some intellectual back shop or secret crucible, and were as little as possible implied in the aspect of her life. There is nothing more singular or striking in Mr. Cross's volumes than the absence of any indication, up to the time the *Scenes from Clerical Life* were published, that Miss Evans was a likely person to have written them; unless it be the absence of any indication, after they were published, that the deeply studious, concentrated, homekeeping Mrs. Lewes was a likely person to have produced their successors. I know very well that there is no such thing in general as the air of the novelist, which it behooves those who practice this art to put on so that they may be recognized in public places; but there is such a thing as the air of the sage, the scholar, the philosopher, the votary of abstractions and of the lore of the ages, and in this pale but rich *Life* that is the face that is presented.

The plan on which it is composed is, so far as I know, without precedent, but it is a plan that could have occurred only to an "outsider" in literature, if I may venture to apply this term to one who has executed a literary task with such tact and success. The regular *littérateur*, hampered by tradition, would, I think, have lacked the boldness, the artless artfulness, of conjoining in the same text selected morsels of letters and journals, so as to

form a continuous and multifarious *talk*, on the writer's part, punctuated only by marginal names and dates and divisions into chapters. There is something a little violent in the system, in spite of our feeling that it has been applied with a supple hand; but it was probably the best that Mr. Cross could have adopted, and it served especially well his purpose of appearing only as an arranger, or rather of not appearing at all. The modesty, the good taste, the self-effacement of the editorial element in the book are, in a word, complete, and the clearness and care of arrangement, the accuracy of reference, leave nothing to be desired. The form Mr. Cross has chosen, or invented, becomes, in the application, highly agreeable, and his rule of omission (for we have, almost always, only parts and passages of letters) has not prevented his volumes from being as copious as we could wish. George Eliot was not a great letter writer, either in quantity or quality; she had neither the spirit, the leisure, nor the lightness of mind to conjure with the epistolary pen, and after her union with George Henry Lewes her disposition to play with it was further damped by his quick activity in her service. Letter writing was part of the trouble he saved her; in this as in other ways he interposed between the world and his sensitive companion. The difference is striking between her habits in this respect and those of Madame George Sand, whose correspondence has lately been collected into six closely printed volumes which testify afresh to her extraordinary energy and facility. Madame Sand, however, indefatigable producer as she was, was not a woman of study; she lived from day to day, from hand to mouth (intellectually), as it were, and had no general plan of life and culture. Her English compeer took the problem of production more seriously; she distilled her very substance into the things she gave the world. There was therefore so much the less of it left for casual utterance.

It was not till Marian Evans was past thirty, indeed, that she became an author by profession, and it may accordingly be supposed that her early letters are those which take us most into her confidence. This is true of those written when she was on the threshold of womanhood, which form a very full expression

of her feelings at the time. The drawback here is that the feelings themselves are rather wanting in interest—one may almost say in amiability. At the age of twenty Marian Evans was a deeply religious young woman, whose faith took the form of a narrow evangelicism. Religious, in a manner, she remained to the end of her life, in spite of her adoption of a scientific explanation of things; but in the year 1839 she thought it ungodly to go to concerts and to read novels. She writes to her former governess that she can “only sigh” when she hears of the “marrying and giving in marriage that is constantly transacted”; expresses enjoyment of Hannah More’s letters (“the contemplation of so blessed a character as hers is very salutary”); wishes that she “might be more useful in her own obscure and lowly station” (“I feel myself to be a mere cumberer of the ground”), that she “might seek to be sanctified wholly.” These first fragments of her correspondence, first glimpses of her mind, are very curious; they have nothing in common with the later ones but the deep seriousness of the tone. Serious, of course, George Eliot continued to be to the end; the sense of moral responsibility, of the sadness and difficulty of life, was the most inveterate part of her nature. But the provincial strain in the letters from which I have quoted is very marked: they reflect a meagerness and grayness of outward circumstance; have a tinge as of dissent in a small English town, where there are brick chapels in back streets. This was only a moment in her development; but there is something touching in the contrast between such a state of mind and that of the woman before whom, at middle age, all the culture of the world unrolled itself, and towards whom fame and fortune, and an activity which at the earlier period she would have thought very profane, pressed with rapidity. In 1839, as I have said, she thought very meanly of the art in which she was to attain such distinction. “I venture to believe that the same causes which exist in my own breast to render novels and romances pernicious have their counterpart in every fellow creature. . . . The weapons of Christian warfare were never sharpened at the forge of romance.” The style of these pietistic utterances is singularly strenuous and hard; the light and familiar

are absent from them, and I think it is not too much to say that they show scarcely a single premonitory ray of the genius which had *Silas Marner* in reserve. This dryness was only a phase, indeed; it was speedily dispelled by more abundant showers of emotion—by the overflow of perception. Premonitory rays are still absent, however, after her first asceticism passes away—a change apparently coincident with her removal from the country to the pleasant old town of Coventry, where all American pilgrims to midland shrines go and murmur Tennyson on the bridge. After the evangelical note began to fade it was still the desire for faith (a faith which could reconcile human affection with some of the unamiable truths of science), still the religious idea that colored her thought; not the love of human life as a spectacle, nor the desire to spread the wings of the artist. It must be remembered, though, that during these years, if she was not stimulating prophecy in any definite form she was inhaling those impressions which were to make her first books so full of the delightful midland quality, the air of old-fashioned provincialism. The first piece of literary work she attempted (and she brought it to the best conclusion), was a translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, which she began in 1844, when she was not yet twenty-five years of age; a task which indicates not only the persistence of her religious preoccupations, as well as the higher form they took, but the fact that with the limited facilities afforded by her life at that time she had mastered one of the most difficult of foreign languages and the vocabulary of a German exegetist. In 1841 she thought it wrong to encourage novels, but in 1847 she confesses to reading George Sand with great delight. There is no exhibition in Mr. Cross's pages of the steps by which she passed over to a position of tolerant skepticism; but the details of the process are after all of minor importance: the essential fact is that the change was predetermined by the nature of her mind.

The great event of her life was of course her acquaintance with George Henry Lewes. I say "of course," because this relation had an importance even more controlling than the publication and success of her first attempt at fiction, inasmuch

as it was in consequence of Mr. Lewes's friendly urgency that she wrote the *Scenes of Clerical Life*. She met him for the first time in London, in the autumn of 1851; but it was not till the summer of 1854 that the connection with him began (it was marked to the world by their going to spend together several months in Germany, where he was bent on researches for his *Life of Goethe*), which was to become so much closer than many formal marriages and to last till his death in 1878. The episode of Miss Evans's life in London during these three years was already tolerably well known. She had become by this time a professional literary woman, and had regular work as assistant editor of the *Westminster Review*, to which she gave her most conscientious attention. Her accomplishments now were wide. She was a linguist, a copious reader, an earnest student of history and philosophy. She wrote much for her magazine as well as solicited articles from others, and several of her contributions are contained in the volume of essays published after her death—essays of which it is fair to say that they give but a faint intimation of her latent powers. George Henry Lewes was a versatile, hard-working journalist, with a tendency, apparently, of the drifting sort; and after having been made acquainted with each other by Mr. Herbert Spencer, the pair commingled their sympathies and their efforts. Her letters, at this season, contain constant mention of Lewes (one allusion to the effect that he "has quite won my regard, after having had a good deal of my vituperation"); she takes an interest in his health and corrects his proofs for him when he is absent. It was impossible for Mr. Lewes to marry, as he had a wife living, from whom he was separated. He had also three children, of whom the care did not devolve upon their mother. The union Miss Evans formed with him was a deliberate step, of which she accepted all the consequences. These consequences were excellent, so far as the world is at liberty to judge, save in an important particular. This particular is the fact that her false position, as we may call it, produced upon George Eliot's life a certain effect of sequestration which was not favorable to social freedom, or to freedom of observation, and which excited on the part of her companion

a protecting, sheltering, fostering, precautionary attitude—the assumption that they lived in special, in abnormal conditions. It would be too much to say that George Eliot had not the courage of the situation she had embraced, but she had, at least, not the levity, the indifference; she was unable, in the premises, to be sufficiently superficial. Her deep, strenuous, much-considering mind, of which the leading mark is the capacity for a sort of luminous brooding, fed upon the idea of her irregularity with an intensity which doubtless only her magnificent intellectual activity and Lewes's brilliancy and ingenuity kept from being morbid. The fault of most of her work is the absence of spontaneity, the excess of reflection; and by her action in 1854 (which seemed superficially to be of the sort usually termed reckless), she committed herself to being nothing if not reflective, to cultivating a kind of compensatory earnestness. Her earnestness, her educated conscience, her exalted sense of responsibility, were colored by her peculiar position; they committed her to a plan of life, of study, in which the accidental, the unexpected, were too little allowed for, and this is what I mean by speaking of her sequestration. If her relations with the world had been easier, in a word, her books would have been less difficult. Mr. Cross, very justly, merely touches upon this question of her forming a tie which was deprived of the sanction of the law; but he gives a portion of a letter written to Mrs. Bray more than a year after it had begun, which sufficiently indicates the serenity of her resolution. Repentance, of course, she never had—the success of her experiment was too rare and complete for that; and I do not mean that her attitude was ever for a moment apologetic. On the contrary, it was only too superabundantly confirmatory. Her effort was to pitch her life ever in the key of the superior wisdom that made her say to Mrs. Bray, in the letter of September 1855, "That any unworldly, unsuperstitious person who is sufficiently acquainted with the realities of life can pronounce my relation to Mr. Lewes immoral, I can only understand when I remember how subtle and complex are the influences that mold opinion." I need not attempt to project the light of criticism on this particular case of

conscience; there remains ever, in the mutual relations of intelligent men and women, an element which is for themselves alone to consider. One reflection, however, forces itself upon the mind: if the connection had not taken place we should have lost the spectacle and influence of one of the most successful partnerships presented to us in the history of human affection. There has been much talk about George Eliot's "example," which is not to be deprecated so long as it is remembered that in speaking of the example of a woman of this value we can only mean example for good. Exemplary indeed in her long connection with George Henry Lewes were the qualities on which beneficent intimacy rests.

She was thirty-seven years old when the *Scenes from Clerical Life* were published, but this work opened wide for her the door of success, and fame and fortune came to her rapidly. Her union with Lewes had been a union of poverty: there is a sentence in her journal, of the year 1856, which speaks of their ascending certain cliffs called the Tors, at Ilfracombe, "only twice; for a tax of 3*d.* per head was demanded for this luxury, and we could not afford a sixpenny walk very frequently." The incentive to writing *Amos Barton* seems to have been mainly pecuniary. There was an urgent need to make money, and it appears to have been agreed between the pair that there was at least no harm in the lady's trying her hand at a story. Lewes professed a belief that she would really do something in this line, while she, more skeptical, reserved her judgment till after the test. The *Scenes from Clerical Life* were therefore pre-eminently an empirical work of fiction. With the sending of the first episode to the late Mr. John Blackwood for approval, there opened a relation between publisher and author which lasted to the end, and which was probably more genial and unclouded than any in the annals of literature, as well as almost unprecedentedly lucrative to both parties. This first book of George Eliot's has little of the usual air of a first book, none of the crudity of an early attempt; it was not the work of a youthful person, and one sees that the material had been long in her mind. The ripeness, the pathos, a sort of considered quality, are as

striking today as when *Amos Barton* and *Janet's Repentance* were published, and enable us to understand that people should have asked themselves with surprise, at that time, who it was, in the midst of them, that had been taking notes so long and so wisely without giving a sign. *Adam Bede*, written rapidly, appeared in 1859, and George Eliot found herself a consummate novelist without having suspected it. The book was an immense, a brilliant success, and from this moment the author's life took its definite and final direction. She accepted the great obligations which to her mind belonged to a person who had the ear of the public, and her whole effort thenceforth was highly to respond to them—to respond to them by teaching, by vivid moral illustration, and even by direct exhortation. It is striking that from the first her conception of the novelist's task is never in the least as the game of art. The most interesting passage in Mr. Cross's volumes is to my sense a simple sentence in a short entry in her journal in the year 1859, just after she had finished the first volume of *The Mill on the Floss* (the original title of which, by the way, had been *Sister Maggie*): "We have just finished reading aloud *Père Goriot*, a hateful book." That Balzac's masterpiece should have elicited from her only this remark, at a time, too, when her mind might have been opened to it by her own activity of composition, is significant of so many things that the few words are, in the whole *Life*, those I should have been most sorry to lose. Of course they are not all George Eliot would have had to say about Balzac, if some other occasion than a simple jotting in a diary had presented itself. Still, what even a jotting may *not* have said after a first perusal of *Le Père Goriot* is eloquent; it illuminates the author's general attitude with regard to the novel, which, for her, was not primarily a picture of life, capable of deriving a high value from its form, but a moralized fable, the last word of a philosophy endeavoring to teach by example.

This is a very noble and defensible view, and one must speak respectfully of any theory of work which would produce such fruit as *Romola* and *Middlemarch*. But it testifies to that side of George Eliot's nature which was weakest—the absence of

free aesthetic life (I venture this remark in the face of a passage quoted from one of her letters in Mr. Cross's third volume); it gives the hand, as it were, to several other instances that may be found in the same pages. "My function is that of the *aesthetic*, not the doctrinal teacher; the rousing of the nobler emotions, which make mankind desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures, concerning which the artistic mind, however strongly moved by social sympathy, is often not the best judge." That is the passage referred to in my parenthetic allusion, and it is a good general description of the manner in which George Eliot may be said to have acted on her generation; but the "artistic mind," the possession of which it implies, existed in her with limitations remarkable in a writer whose imagination was so rich. We feel in her, always, that she proceeds from the abstract to the concrete; that her figures and situations are evolved, as the phrase is, from her moral consciousness, and are only indirectly the products of observation. They are deeply studied and massively supported, but they are not *seen*, in the irresponsible plastic way. The world was, first and foremost, for George Eliot, the moral, the intellectual world; the personal spectacle came after; and lovingly, humanly as she regarded it, we constantly feel that she cares for the things she finds in it only so far as they are types. The philosophic door is always open, on her stage, and we are aware that the somewhat cooling draught of ethical purpose draws across it. This constitutes half the beauty of her work; the constant reference to ideas may be an excellent source of one kind of reality—for, after all, the secret of seeing a thing well is not necessarily that you see nothing else. Her preoccupation with the universe helped to make her characters strike you as also belonging to it; it raised the roof, widened the area, of her aesthetic structure. Nothing is finer, in her genius, than the combination of her love of general truth and love of the special case; without this, indeed, we should not have heard of her as a novelist, for the passion of the special case is surely the basis of the storyteller's art. All the same, that little sign of all that Balzac failed to suggest to her showed at what perils the special

case got itself considered. Such dangers increased as her activity proceeded, and many judges perhaps hold that in her ultimate work, in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* (especially the latter), it ceased to be considered at all. Such critics assure us that Gwendolen and Grandcourt, Deronda and Myra, are not concrete images, but disembodied types, pale abstractions, signs and symbols of a "great lesson." I give up Deronda and Myra to the objector, but Grandcourt and Gwendolen seem to me to have a kind of superior reality; to be, in a high degree, what one demands of a figure in a novel, planted on their legs and complete.

The truth is, perception and reflection, at the outset, divided George Eliot's great talent between them; but as time went on circumstances led the latter to develop itself at the expense of the former—one of these circumstances being apparently the influence of George Henry Lewes. Lewes was interested in science, in cosmic problems; and though his companion, thanks to the original bent of her versatile, powerful mind, needed no impulse from without to turn herself to speculation, yet the contagion of his studies pushed her further than she would otherwise have gone in the direction of scientific observation, which is but another form of what I have called reflection. Her early novels are full of natural as distinguished from systematic observation, though even in them it is less the dominant note, I think, than the love of the "moral," the reaction of thought in the face of the human comedy. They had observation sufficient, at any rate, to make their fortune, and it may well be said that that is enough for any novel. In *Silas Marner*, in *Adam Bede*, the quality seems gilded by a sort of autumn haze, an afternoon light, of meditation, which mitigates the sharpness of portraiture. I doubt very much whether the author herself had a clear vision, for instance, of the marriage of Dinah Morris to Adam, or of the rescue of Hetty from the scaffold at the eleventh hour. The reason of this may be, indeed, that her perception was a perception of nature much more than of art, and that these particular incidents do not belong to nature (to my sense at least); by which I do not mean that they belong to a very

happy art. I cite them, on the contrary, as an evidence of artistic weakness; they are a very good example of the view in which a story must have marriages and rescues in the nick of time, as a matter of course. I must add, in fairness to George Eliot, that the marriage of the nunlike Dinah, which shocks the reader, who sees in it a base concession, was a *trouvaille* of Lewes's and is a small sign of that same faulty judgment in literary things which led him to throw his influence on the side of her writing verse—verse which is *all* reflection, with direct, vivifying vision, or emotion, remarkably absent.

It is a part of this same limitation of the pleasure she was capable of taking in the fact of representation for itself that the various journals and notes of her visits to the Continent are, though by no means destitute of the tempered enjoyment of foreign sights which was as near as she ever came to rapture, singularly vague in expression on the subject of the general and particular spectacle—the life and manners, the works of art. She enumerates diligently all the pictures and statues she sees, and the way she does so is a proof of her active, earnest intellectual habits; but it is rarely apparent that they have said much to her, or that what they have said is one of their deeper secrets. She is capable of writing, after coming out of the great chapel of San Lorenzo, in Florence, that “the world-famous statues of Michelangelo on the tombs . . . remained to us as affected and exaggerated in the original as in copies and casts.” That sentence startles one, on the part of the author of *Romola*, and that Mr. Cross should have printed it is a commendable proof of his impartiality.

It was in *Romola*, precisely, that the equilibrium I spoke of just now was lost, and that reflection began to weigh down the scale. *Romola* is pre-eminently a study of the human conscience in an historical setting which is studied almost as much, and few passages in Mr. Cross's volumes are more interesting than those relating to the production of this magnificent romance. George Eliot took all her work with a noble seriousness, but into none of it did she throw herself with more passion. It drained from her as much as she gave to it, and none of her

writing plowed into her, to use her biographer's expression, so deeply. She told him that she began it a young woman and finished it an old one. More than any of her novels it was evolved, as I have said, from her moral consciousness—a moral consciousness encircled by a prodigious amount of literary research. Her literary ideal was at all times of the highest, but in the preparation of *Romola* it placed her under a control absolutely religious. She read innumerable books, some of them bearing only remotely on her subject, and consulted without stint contemporary records and documents. She neglected nothing that would enable her to live, intellectually, in the period she had undertaken to describe. We know, for the most part, I think, the result. *Romola* is on the whole the finest thing she wrote, but its defects are almost on the scale of its beauties. The great defect is that, except in the person of Tito Melema, it does not seem positively to live. It is overladen with learning, it smells of the lamp, it tastes just perceptibly of pedantry. In spite of its want of blood, however, it assuredly will survive in men's remembrance, for the finest pages in it belong to the finest part of our literature. It is on the whole a failure, but such a failure as only a great talent can produce; and one may say of it that there are many great "hits" far less interesting than such a mistake. A twentieth part of the erudition would have sufficed, would have given us the feeling and color of the time, if there had been more of the breath of the Florentine streets, more of the faculty of optical evocation, a greater saturation of the senses with the elements of the adorable little city. The difficulty with the book, for the most part, is that it is not Italian; it has always seemed to me the most Germanic of the author's productions. I cannot imagine a German writing (in the way of a novel) anything half so good; but if I could imagine it I should suppose *Romola* to be very much the sort of picture he would achieve—the sort of medium through which he would show us how, by the Arno-side, the fifteenth century came to an end. One of the sources of interest in the book is that, more than any of its companions, it indicates how much George Eliot proceeded by reflection and research; how little important, comparatively,

she thought that same breath of the streets. It carries to a maximum the indoor quality.

The most definite impression produced, perhaps, by Mr. Cross's volumes (by the second and third) is that of simple success—success which had been the result of no external accidents (unless her union with Lewes be so denominated), but was involved in the very faculties nature had given her. All the elements of an eventual happy fortune met in her constitution. The great foundation, to begin with, was there—the magnificent mind, vigorous, luminous, and eminently sane. To her intellectual vigor, her immense facility, her exemption from cerebral lassitude, her letters and journals bear the most copious testimony. Her daily stint of arduous reading and writing was of the largest. Her ability, as one may express it in the most general way, was astonishing, and it belonged to every season of her long and fruitful career. Her passion for study encountered no impediment, but was able to make everything feed and support it. The extent and variety of her knowledge is by itself the measure of a capacity which triumphed wherever it wished. Add to this an immense special talent which, as soon as it tries its wings, is found to be adequate to the highest, longest flights and brings back great material rewards. George Eliot, of course, had drawbacks and difficulties, physical infirmities, constant liabilities to headache, dyspepsia, and other illness, to deep depression, to despair about her work; but these jolts of the chariot were small in proportion to the impetus acquired, and were hardly greater than was necessary for reminding her of the secret of all ambitious workers in the field of art—that effort, effort, always effort, is the only key to success. Her great furtherance was that, intensely intellectual being as she was, the life of affection and emotion was also widely open to her. She had all the initiation of knowledge and none of its dryness, all the advantages of judgment and all the luxuries of feeling. She had an imagination which enabled her to sit at home with book and pen, and yet enter into the life of other generations; project herself into Warwickshire alehouses and Florentine symposia, reconstitute conditions utterly different

from her own. Toward the end she triumphed over the great impossible; she reconciled the greatest sensibility with the highest serenity. She succeeded in guarding her pursuits from intrusion; in carrying out her habits; in sacrificing her work as little as possible; in leading, in the midst of a society united in conspiracies to interrupt and vulgarize, an independent, strenuously personal life. People who had the honor of penetrating into the sequestered precinct of the Priory—the house in London in which she lived from 1863 to 1880—remember well a kind of sanctity in the place, an atmosphere of stillness and concentration, something that suggested a literary temple.

It was part of the good fortune of which I speak that in Mr. Lewes she had found the most devoted of caretakers, the most jealous of ministers, a companion through whom all business was transacted. The one drawback of this relation was that, considering what she attempted, it limited her experience too much to itself; but for the rest it helped her in a hundred ways—it saved her nerves, it fortified her privacy, it protected her leisure, it diminished the friction of living. His admiration of her work was of the largest, though not always, I think, truly discriminating, and he surrounded her with a sort of temperate zone of independence—independence of everything except him and her own standards. Nervous, sensitive, delicate in every way in which genius is delicate (except, indeed, that she had a robust reason), it was a great thing for her to have accident made rare and exposure mitigated; and to this result Lewes, as the administrator of her fame, admirably contributed. He filtered the stream, giving her only the clearer water. The accident of reading reviews of one's productions, especially when they are bad, is, for the artist of our day, one of the most frequent; and Mr. Lewes, by keeping these things out of her way, enabled her to achieve what was perhaps the highest form of her success—an inaccessibility to the newspaper. "It is remarkable to me," she writes in 1876, "that I have entirely lost my *personal* melancholy. I often, of course, have melancholy thoughts about the destinies of my fellow creatures, but I am never in that *mood* of sadness which used to be my frequent visitant even in the midst

of external happiness." Her later years, colored by this accumulated wisdom, when she had taken her final form before the world and had come to be regarded more and more as a teacher and philosopher, are full of suggestion to the critic, but I have exhausted my limited space. There is a certain coldness in them perhaps—the coldness that results from most of one's opinions being formed, one's mind made up, on many great subjects; from the degree, in a word, to which "culture" had taken the place of the more primitive processes of experience.

"Ah, les livres, ils nous débordent, ils nous étouffent—nous périssons par les livres!" That cry of a distinguished French novelist (there is no harm in mentioning M. Alphonse Daudet), which fell upon the ear of the present writer some time ago, represents as little as possible the emotion of George Eliot confronted with literatures and sciences. M. Alphonse Daudet went on to say that, to his mind, the personal impression, the effort of direct observation, was the most precious source of information for the novelist; that nothing could take its place; that the effect of books was constantly to check and pervert this effort; that a second-hand, third-hand, tenth-hand impression was constantly tending to substitute itself for a fresh perception; that we were ending by seeing everything through literature instead of through our own senses; and that in short literature was rapidly killing literature. This view has immense truth on its side, but the case would be too simple if, on one side or the other, there were only one way of finding out. The effort of the novelist is to find out, to know, or at least to see, and no one, in the nature of things, can less afford to be indifferent to sidelights. Books are themselves, unfortunately, an expression of human passions. George Eliot had no doubts, at any rate; if impressionism, before she laid down her pen, had already begun to be talked about, it would have made no difference with her—she would have had no desire to pass for an impressionist.

There is one question we cannot help asking ourselves as we close this record of her life; it is impossible not to let our imagination wander in the direction of what turn her mind or her for-

tune might have taken if she had never met George Henry Lewes, or never cast her lot with his. It is safe to say that, in one way or another, in the long run, her novels would have got themselves written, and it is possible they would have been more natural, as one may call it, more familiarly and casually human. Would her development have been less systematic, more irresponsible, more personal, and should we have had more of *Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner* and less of *Romola* and *Middlemarch*? The question, after all, cannot be answered, and I do not push it, being myself very grateful for *Middlemarch* and *Romola*. It is as George Eliot does actually present herself that we must judge her—a condition that will not prevent her from striking us as one of the noblest, most beautiful minds of our time. This impression bears the reader company throughout these letters and notes. It is impossible not to feel, as we close them, that she was an admirable being. They are less brilliant, less entertaining, than we might have hoped; they contain fewer “good things” and have even a certain grayness of tone, something measured and subdued, as of a person talking without ever raising her voice. But there rises from them a kind of fragrance of moral elevation; a love of justice, truth, and light; a large, generous way of looking at things; and a constant effort to hold high the torch in the dusky spaces of man’s conscience. That is how we see her during the latter years of her life: frail, delicate, shivering a little, much fatigued and considerably spent, but still meditating on what could be acquired and imparted; still living, in the intelligence, a freer, larger life than probably had ever been the portion of any woman. To her own sex her memory, her example, will remain of the highest value; those of them for whom the “development” of woman is the hope of the future ought to erect a monument to George Eliot. She helped on the cause more than anyone, in proving how few limitations are of necessity implied in the feminine organism. She went so far that such a distance seems enough, and in her effort she sacrificed no tenderness, no grace. There is much talk today about things being “open to women”; but George Eliot showed that there is nothing that is closed. If we criticize her novels,

we must remember that her nature came first and her work afterwards, and that it is not remarkable they should not resemble the productions, say, of Alexandre Dumas. What is remarkable, extraordinary—and the process remains inscrutable and mysterious—is that this quiet, anxious, sedentary, serious, invalidical English lady, without animal spirits, without adventures or sensations, should have made us believe that nothing in the world was alien to her; should have produced such rich, deep, masterly pictures of the multiform life of man.

EMERSON *

Mr. Elliot Cabot has made a very interesting contribution to a class of books of which our literature, more than any other, offers admirable examples: he has given us a biography¹ intelligently and carefully composed. These two volumes are a model of responsible editing—I use that term because they consist largely of letters and extracts from letters: nothing could resemble less the manner in which the mere bookmaker strings together his frequently questionable pearls and shovels the heap into the presence of the public. Mr. Cabot has selected, compared, discriminated, steered an even course between meagerness and redundancy, and managed to be constantly and happily illustrative. And his work, moreover, strikes us as the better done from the fact that it stands for one of the two things that make an absorbing memoir a good deal more than for the other. If these two things be the conscience of the writer and the career of his hero, it is not difficult to see on which side the biographer of Emerson has found himself strongest. Ralph Waldo Emerson was a man of genius, but he led for nearly eighty years a life in which the sequence of events had little of the rapidity, or the complexity, that a spectator loves. There is something we miss very much as we turn these pages—something that has a kind of accidental, inevitable presence in almost any personal record—something that may be most definitely indicated under the name of color. We lay down the book with a singular impression of paleness—an impression that comes partly from the tone of the biographer and partly from the moral complexion of his subject, but mainly from the vacancy of the page itself. That of Emerson's personal history is condensed into the single word Concord, and all the condensation in the

*From *Partial Portraits*, by Henry James (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888). Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

¹*A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*; by James Elliot Cabot. 2 vols. London: 1887.

world will not make it look rich. It presents a most continuous surface. Mr. Matthew Arnold, in his *Discourses in America*, contests Emerson's complete right to the title of a man of letters; yet letters surely were the very texture of his history. Passions, alternations, affairs, adventures had absolutely no part in it. It stretched itself out in enviable quiet—a quiet in which we hear the jotting of the pencil in the notebook. It is the very life for literature (I mean for one's own, not that of another): fifty years of residence in the home of one's forefathers, pervaded by reading, by walking in the woods, and the daily addition of sentence to sentence.

If the interest of Mr. Cabot's penciled portrait is incontestable and yet does not spring from variety, it owes nothing either to a source from which it might have borrowed much and which it is impossible not to regret a little that he has so completely neglected: I mean a greater reference to the social conditions in which Emerson moved, the company he lived in, the moral air he breathed. If his biographer had allowed himself a little more of the ironic touch, had put himself once in a way under the protection of Sainte-Beuve and had attempted something of a general picture, we should have felt that he only went with the occasion. I may overestimate the latent treasures of the field, but it seems to me there was distinctly an opportunity—an opportunity to make up moreover in some degree for the white tint of Emerson's career considered simply in itself. We know a man imperfectly until we know his society, and we but half know a society until we know its manners. This is especially true of a man of letters, for manners lie very close to literature. From those of the New England world in which Emerson's character formed itself Mr. Cabot almost averts his lantern, though we feel sure that there would have been delightful glimpses to be had and that he would have been in a position—that is, that he has all the knowledge that would enable him—to help us to them. It is as if he could not trust himself, knowing the subject only too well. This adds to the effect of extreme discretion that we find in his volumes, but it is the cause of our not finding certain things, certain figures and scenes, evoked.

What is evoked is Emerson's pure spirit, by a copious, sifted series of citations and comments. But we must read as much as possible between the lines, and the picture of the transcendental time (to mention simply one corner) has yet to be painted—the lines have yet to be bitten in. Meanwhile we are held and charmed by the image of Emerson's mind and the extreme appeal which his physiognomy makes to our art of discrimination. It is so fair, so uniform and impersonal, that its features are simply fine shades, the gradations of tone of a surface whose proper quality was of the smoothest and on which nothing was reflected with violence. It is a pleasure of the critical sense to find, with Mr. Cabor's extremely intelligent help, a notation for such delicacies.

We seem to see the circumstances of our author's origin, immediate and remote, in a kind of high, vertical, moral light, the brightness of a society at once very simple and very responsible. The rare singleness that was in his nature (so that he was *all* the warning moral voice, without distraction or counter-solicitation), was also in the stock he sprang from, clerical for generations, on both sides, and clerical in the Puritan sense. His ancestors had lived long (for nearly two centuries) in the same corner of New England, and during that period had preached and studied and prayed and practiced. It is impossible to imagine a spirit better prepared in advance to be exactly what it was—better educated for its office in its faraway unconscious beginnings. There is an inner satisfaction in seeing so straight, although so patient, a connection between the stem and the flower, and such a proof that when life wishes to produce something exquisite in quality she takes her measures many years in advance. A conscience like Emerson's could not have been turned off, as it were, from one generation to another: a succession of attempts, a long process of refining, was required. His perfection, in his own line, comes largely from the noninterruption of the process.

As most of us are made up of ill-assorted pieces, his reader, and Mr. Cabor's, envies him this transmitted unity, in which there was no mutual hustling or crowding of elements. It must

have been a kind of luxury to be—that is, to feel—so homogeneous, and it helps to account for his serenity, his power of acceptance, and that absence of personal passion which makes his private correspondence read like a series of beautiful circulars or expanded cards *pour prendre congé*. He had the equanimity of a result; nature had taken care of him and he had only to speak. He accepted himself as he accepted others, accepted everything; and his absence of eagerness, or in other words his modesty, was that of a man with whom it is not a question of success, who has nothing invested or at stake. The investment, the stake, was that of the race, of all the past Emersons and Bulkeleyes and Waldos. There is much that makes us smile, today, in the commotion produced by his secession from the mild Unitarian pulpit: we wonder at a condition of opinion in which any utterance of his should appear to be wanting in superior piety—in the essence of good instruction. All that is changed: the great difference has become the infinitely small, and we admire a state of society in which scandal and schism took on no darker hue; but there is even yet a sort of drollery in the spectacle of a body of people among whom the author of *The American Scholar* and of the Address of 1838 at the Harvard Divinity College passed for profane, and who failed to see that he only gave his plea for the spiritual life the advantage of a brilliant expression. They were so provincial as to think that brilliancy came ill recommended, and they were shocked at his ceasing to care for the prayer and the sermon. They might have perceived that he *was* the prayer and the sermon: not in the least a secularizer, but in his own subtle insinuating way a sanctifier.

Of the three periods into which his life divides itself, the first was (as in the case of most men) that of movement, experiment and selection—that of effort, too, and painful probation. Emerson had his message, but he was a good while looking for his form—the form which, as he himself would have said, he never completely found and of which it was rather characteristic of him that his later years (with their growing refusal to give him the *word*), wishing to attack him in his most vulnerable point,

where his tenure was least complete, had in some degree the effect of despoiling him. It all sounds rather bare and stern, Mr. Cabot's account of his youth and early manhood, and we get an impression of a terrible paucity of alternatives. If he would be neither a farmer nor a trader he could "teach school"; that was the main resource and a part of the general educative process of the young New Englander who proposed to devote himself to the things of the mind. There was an advantage in the nudity, however, which was that, in Emerson's case at least, the things of the mind did get themselves admirably well considered. If it be his great distinction and his special sign that he had a more vivid conception of the moral life than anyone else, it is probably not fanciful to say that he owed it in part to the limited way in which he saw our capacity for living illustrated. The plain, God-fearing, practical society which surrounded him was not fertile in variations: it had great intelligence and energy, but it moved altogether in the straightforward direction. On three occasions later—three journeys to Europe—he was introduced to a more complicated world; but his spirit, his moral taste, as it were, abode always within the undecorated walls of his youth. There he could dwell with that ripe unconsciousness of evil which is one of the most beautiful signs by which we know him. His early writings are full of quaint animadversion upon the vices of the place and time, but there is something charmingly vague, light, and general in the arraignment. Almost the worst he can say is that these vices are negative and that his fellow townsmen are not heroic. We feel that his first impressions were gathered in a community from which misery and extravagance, and either extreme, of any sort, were equally absent. What the life of New England fifty years ago offered to the observer was the common lot, in a kind of achromatic picture, without particular intensifications. It was from this table of the usual, the merely typical joys and sorrows that he proceeded to generalize—a fact that accounts in some degree for a certain inadequacy and thinness in his enumerations. But it helps to account also for his direct, intimate vision of the soul itself—not in its emotions, its contortions and per-

versions, but in its passive, exposed, yet healthy form. He knows the nature of man and the long tradition of its dangers; but we feel that whereas he can put his finger on the remedies, lying for the most part, as they do, in the deep recesses of virtue, of the spirit, he has only a kind of hearsay, uninformed acquaintance with the disorders. It would require some ingenuity, the reader may say too much, to trace closely this correspondence between his genius and the frugal, dutiful, happy but decidedly lean Boston of the past, where there was a great deal of will but very little fulcrum—like a ministry without an opposition.

The genius itself it seems to me impossible to contest—I mean the genius for seeing character as a real and supreme thing. Other writers have arrived at a more complete expression: Wordsworth and Goethe, for instance, give one a sense of having found their form, whereas with Emerson we never lose the sense that he is still seeking it. But no one has had so steady and constant, and above all so natural, a vision of what we require and what we are capable of in the way of aspiration and independence. With Emerson it is ever the special capacity for moral experience—always that and only that. We have the impression, somehow, that life had never bribed him to look at anything but the soul; and indeed in the world in which he grew up and lived the bribes and lures, the beguilements and prizes, were few. He was in an admirable position for showing, what he constantly endeavored to show, that the prize was within. Anyone who in New England at that time could do that was sure of success, of listeners and sympathy: most of all, of course, when it was a question of doing it with such a divine persuasiveness. Moreover, the way in which Emerson did it added to the charm—by word of mouth, face to face, with a rare, irresistible voice and a beautiful mild, modest authority. If Mr. Arnold is struck with the limited degree in which he was a man of letters, I suppose it is because he is more struck with his having been, as it were, a man of lectures. But the lecture surely was never more purged of its grossness—the quality in it that suggests a strong light and a big brush—than as it issued from Emerson's lips; so far from being a vulgarization, it was simply the esoteric

made audible, and instead of treating the few as the many, after the usual fashion of gentlemen on platforms, he treated the many as the few. There was probably no other society at that time in which he would have got so many persons to understand that; for we think the better of his audience as we read him, and wonder where else people would have had so much moral attention to give. It is to be remembered, however, that during the winter of 1847-48, on the occasion of his second visit to England, he found many listeners in London and in provincial cities. Mr. Cabot's volumes are full of evidence of the satisfactions he offered, the delights and revelations he may be said to have promised, to a race which had to seek its entertainment, its rewards and consolations, almost exclusively in the moral world. But his own writings are fuller still; we find an instance almost wherever we open them.

All these great and transcendent properties are ours. . . . Let us find room for this great guest in our small houses. . . . Where the heart is, there the muses, there the gods sojourn, and not in any geography of fame. Massachusetts, Connecticut River, and Boston Bay, you think paltry places, and the ear loves names of foreign and classic topography. But here we are, and if we will tarry a little we may come to learn that here is best. . . . The Jerseys were handsome enough ground for Washington to tread, and London streets for the feet of Milton. . . . That country is fairest which is inhabited by the noblest minds.

We feel, or suspect, that Milton is thrown in as a hint that the London streets are no such great place, and it all sounds like a sort of pleading consolation against bleakness.

The beauty of a hundred passages of this kind in Emerson's pages is that they are effective, that they do come home, that they rest upon insight and not upon ingenuity, and that if they are sometimes obscure it is never with the obscurity of paradox. We seem to see the people turning out into the snow after hearing them, glowing with a finer glow than even the climate could give and fortified for a struggle with overshoes and the east wind.

Look to it first and only, that fashion, custom, authority, pleasure, and money, are nothing to you, are not as bandages over your eyes, that you cannot see; but live with the privilege of the immeasurable mind. Not too anxious to visit periodically all families and each family in your parish connection, when you meet one of these men or women be to them a divine man; be to them thought and virtue; let their timid aspirations find in you a friend; let their trampled instincts be genially tempted out in your atmosphere; let their doubts know that you have doubted, and their wonder feel that you have wondered.

When we set against an exquisite passage like that, or like the familiar sentences that open the essay on "History" ("He that is admitted to the right of reason is made freeman of the whole estate. What Plato has thought, he may think; what a saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand"); when we compare the letters, cited by Mr. Cabot, to his wife from Springfield, Illinois (January, 1853) we feel that his spiritual tact needed to be very just, but that if it was so it must have brought a blessing.

Here I am in the deep mud of the prairies, misled I fear into this bog, not by a will-of-the-wisp, such as shine in bogs, but by a young New Hampshire editor, who overestimated the strength of both of us, and fancied I should glitter in the prairie and draw the prairie birds and waders. It rains and thaws incessantly, and if we step off the short street we go up to the shoulders, perhaps, in mud. My chamber is a cabin; my fellow-boarders are legislators. . . . Two or three governors or ex-governors live in the house. . . . I cannot command daylight and solitude for study or for more than a scrawl. . . .

And another extract:

A cold, raw country this, and plenty of night-traveling and arriving at four in the morning to take the last and worst bed in the tavern. Advancing day brings mercy and favor to me, but not the sleep. . . . Mercury 15° below zero. . . . I find well-disposed, kindly people among these sinewy farmers of the North, but in all that is called cultivation they are only ten years old.

He says in another letter (in 1860), "I saw Michigan and its forests and the Wolverines pretty thoroughly"; and on another page Mr. Cabot shows him as speaking of his engagements to lecture in the West as the obligation to "wade, and freeze, and ride, and run, and suffer all manner of indignities." This was not New England, but as regards the country districts throughout, at that time, it was a question of degree. Certainly never was the fine wine of philosophy carried to remoter or queerer corners: never was a more delicate diet offered to "two or three governors, or ex-governors," living in a cabin. It was Mercury, shivering in a mackintosh, bearing nectar and ambrosia to the gods whom he wished those who lived in cabins to endeavor to feel that they might be.

I have hinted that the will, in the old New England society, was a clue without a labyrinth; but it had its use, nevertheless, in helping the young talent to find its mold. There were few or none ready-made: tradition was certainly not so oppressive as might have been inferred from the fact that the air swarmed with reformers and improvers. Of the patient, philosophic manner in which Emerson groped and waited, through teaching the young and preaching to the adult, for his particular vocation, Mr. Cabot's first volume gives a full and orderly account. His passage from the Unitarian pulpit to the lecture desk was a step which at this distance of time can hardly help appearing to us short, though he was long in making it, for even after ceasing to have a parish of his own he freely confounded the two, or willingly, at least, treated the pulpit as a platform. "The young people and the mature hint at odium and the aversion of faces, to be presently encountered in society," he writes in his journal in 1838; but in point of fact the quiet drama of his abdication was not to include the note of suffering. The Boston world might feel disapproval, but it was far too kindly to make this sentiment felt as a weight: every element of martyrdom was there but the important ones of the cause and the persecutors. Mr. Cabot marks the lightness of the penalties of dissent; if they were light in somewhat later years for the transcendentalists and fruit-eaters they could press but little on a man of

Emerson's distinction, to whom, **all his life**, people went not to carry but to ask the right word. There was no consideration to give up, he could not have been one of the dingy if he had tried; but what he did renounce in 1838 was a material profession. He was "settled," and his indisposition to administer the communion unsettled him. He calls the whole business, in writing to Carlyle, "a tempest in our washbowl"; but it had the effect of forcing him to seek a new source of income. His wants were few and his view of life severe, and this came to him, little by little, as he was able to extend the field in which he read his discourses. In 1835, upon his second marriage, he took up his habitation at Concord, and his life fell into the shape it was, in a general way, to keep for the next half century. It is here that we cannot help regretting that Mr. Cabot had not found it possible to treat his career a little more pictorially. Those fifty years of Concord—at least the earlier part of them—would have been a subject bringing into play many odd figures, many human incongruities: they would have abounded in illustrations of the primitive New England character, especially during the time of its queer search for something to expend itself upon. Objects and occupations have multiplied since then, and now there is no lack; but fifty years ago the expanse was wide and free, and we get the impression of a conscience gasping in the void, panting for sensations, with something of the movement of the gills of a landed fish. It would take a very fine point to sketch Emerson's benignant, patient, inscrutable countenance during the various phases of this democratic communion; but the picture, when complete, would be one of the portraits, half a revelation and half an enigma, that suggest and fascinate. Such a striking personage as old Miss Mary Emerson, our author's aunt, whose high intelligence and temper were much of an influence in his earlier years, has a kind of tormenting representative value: we want to see **her** from head to foot, with her frame and her background; **having** (for we happen to have it) an impression that she was a very **remarkable** specimen of the transatlantic Puritan stock, a spirit that would have dared the devil. We miss a more liberal handling, are tempted to add

touches of our own, and end by convincing ourselves that Miss Mary Moody Emerson, grim intellectual virgin and daughter of a hundred ministers, with her local traditions and her combined love of empire and of speculation, would have been an inspiration for a novelist. Hardly less so the charming Mrs. Ripley, Emerson's lifelong friend and neighbor, most delicate and accomplished of women, devoted to Greek and to her house, studious, simple, and dainty—an admirable example of the old-fashioned New England lady. It was a freak of Miss Emerson's somewhat sardonic humor to give her once a broomstick to carry across Boston Common (under the pretext of a "moving"), a task accepted with docility but making of the victim the most benignant witch ever equipped with that utensil.

These ladies, however, were very private persons and not in the least of the reforming tribe: there are others who would have peopled Mr. Cabot's page to whom he gives no more than a mention. We must add that it is open to him to say that their features have become faint and indistinguishable today without more research than the question is apt to be worth: they are embalmed—in a collective way—the apprehensible part of them, in Mr. Frothingham's clever *History of Transcendentalism in New England*. This must be admitted to be true of even so lively a "factor," as we say nowadays, as the imaginative, talkative, intelligent and finally Italianized and shipwrecked Margaret Fuller: she is now one of the dim, one of Carlyle's "then-celebrated" at most. It seemed indeed as if Mr. Cabot rather grudged her a due place in the record of the company that Emerson kept, until we came across the delightful letter he quotes toward the end of his first volume—a letter interesting both as a specimen of inimitable, imperceptible edging away, and as an illustration of the curiously generalized way, as if with an implicit protest against personalities, in which his intercourse, epistolary and other, with his friends was conducted. There is an extract from a letter to his aunt on the occasion of the death of a deeply loved brother (his own) which reads like a passage from some fine old chastened essay on the vanity of earthly hopes: strangely unfamiliar, considering the circumstances.

Courteous and humane to the furthest possible point, to the point of an almost profligate surrender of his attention, there was no familiarity in him, no personal avidity. Even his letters to his wife are courtesies, they are not familiarities. He had only one style, one manner, and he had it for everything—even for himself, in his notes, in his journals. But he had it in perfection for Miss Fuller; he retreats, smiling and flattering, on tiptoe, as if we were advancing. “She ever seems to crave,” he says in his journal, “something which I have not, or have not for her.” What he had was doubtless not what she craved, but the letter in question should be read to see how the modicum was administered. It is only between the lines of such a production that we read that a part of her effect upon him was to bore him; for his system was to practice a kind of universal passive hospitality—he aimed at nothing less. It was only because he was so deferential that he could be so detached; he had polished his aloofness till it reflected the image of his solicitor. And this was not because he was an “uncommunicating egotist,” though he amuses himself with saying so to Miss Fuller: egotism is the strongest of passions, and he was altogether passionless. It was because he had no personal, just as he had almost no physical wants. “Yet I plead not guilty to the malice prepense. ’Tis imbecility, not contumacy, though perhaps somewhat more odious. It seems very just, the irony with which you ask whether you may not be trusted and promise such docility. Alas, we will all promise, but the prophet loiters.” He would not say even to himself that she bored him; he had denied himself the luxury of such easy and obvious short cuts. There is a passage in the lecture (1844) called “Man the Reformer,” in which he hovers round and round the idea that the practice of trade, in certain conditions likely to beget an underhand competition, does not draw forth the nobler parts of character, till the reader is tempted to interrupt him with, “Say at once that it is impossible for a gentleman!”

So he remained always, reading his lectures in the winter, writing them in the summer, and at all seasons taking wood walks and looking for hints in old books.

Delicious summer stroll through the pastures. . . . On the steep park of Conantum I have the old regret—is all this beauty to perish? Shall none re-make this sun and wind; the sky-blue river; the river-blue sky; the yellow meadow, spotted with sacks and sheets of cranberry-gatherers; the red bushes; the iron-gray house, just the color of the granite rocks; the wild orchard?

His observation of nature was exquisite—always the direct, irresistible impression.

The hawking of the wild geese flying by night; the thin note of the companionable titmouse in the winter day; the fall of swarms of flies in autumn, from combats high in the air, pattering down on the leaves like rain; the angry hiss of the wood-birds; the pine throwing out its pollen for the benefit of the next century (*Literary Ethics*).

I have said there was no familiarity in him, but he was familiar with woodland creatures and sounds. Certainly, too, he was on terms of free association with his books, which were numerous and dear to him; though Mr. Cabot says, doubtless with justice, that his dependence on them was slight and that he was not “intimate” with his authors. They did not feed him but they stimulated; they were not his meat but his wine—he took them in sips. But he needed them and liked them; he had volumes of notes from his reading, and he could not have produced his lectures without them. He liked literature as a thing to refer to, liked the very names of which it is full, and used them, especially in his later writings, for purposes of ornament, to dress the dish, sometimes with an unmeasured profusion. I open *The Conduct of Life* and find a dozen on the page. He mentions more authorities than is the fashion today. He can easily say, of course, that he follows a better one—that of his well-loved and irrepressibly allusive Montaigne. In his own bookishness there is a certain contradiction, just as there is a latent incompleteness in his whole literary side. Independence, the return to nature, the finding out and doing for oneself, was what he most highly recommended; and yet he is constantly

reminding his readers of the conventional signs and consecrations—of what other men have done. This was partly because the independence that he had in his eye was an independence without ill-nature, without rudeness (though he likes that word), and full of gentle amiabilities, curiosities, and tolerances; and partly it is a simple matter of form, a literary expedient, confessing its character—on the part of one who had never really mastered the art of composition—of continuous expression. Charming to many a reader, charming yet ever slightly droll, will remain Emerson's frequent invocation of the "scholar": there is such a friendly vagueness and convenience in it. It is of the scholar that he expects all the heroic and uncomfortable things, the concentrations and relinquishments, that make up the noble life. We fancy this personage looking up from his book and armchair a little ruefully and saying, "Ah, but why *me* always and only? Why so much of me, and is there no one else to share the responsibility?" "Neither years nor books have yet availed to extirpate a prejudice then rooted in me [when as a boy he first saw the graduates of his college assembled at their anniversary] that a scholar is the favorite of heaven and earth, the excellency of his country, the happiest of men."

In truth, by this term he means simply the cultivated man, the man who has had a liberal education, and there is a voluntary plainness in his use of it—speaking of such people as the rustic, or the vulgar, speak of those who have a tincture of books. This is characteristic of his humility—that humility which was nine tenths a plain fact (for it is easy for persons who have at bottom a great fund of indifference to be humble), and the remaining tenth a literary habit. Moreover an American reader may be excused for finding in it a pleasant sign of that prestige, often so quaintly and indeed so extravagantly acknowledged, which a connection with literature carries with it among the people of the United States. There is no country in which it is more freely admitted to be a distinction—the distinction; or in which so many persons have become eminent for showing it even in a slight degree. Gentlemen and ladies are celebrated there on this ground who would not on the same ground,

though they might on another, be celebrated anywhere else. Emerson's own tone is an echo of that, when he speaks of the scholar—not of the banker, the great merchant, the legislator, the artist—as the most distinguished figure in the society about him. It is because he has most to give up that he is appealed to for efforts and sacrifices. "Meantime I know that a very different estimate of the scholar's profession prevails in this country," he goes on to say in the address from which I last quoted (the *Literary Ethics*), "and the importunity with which society presses its claim upon young men tends to pervert the views of the youth in respect to the culture of the intellect." The manner in which that is said represents, surely, a serious mistake: with the estimate of the scholar's profession which then prevailed in New England Emerson could have had no quarrel; the ground of his lamentation was another side of the matter. It was not a question of estimate, but of accidental practice. In 1838 there were still so many things of prime material necessity to be done that reading was driven to the wall; but the reader was still thought the cleverest, for he found time as well as intelligence. Emerson's own situation sufficiently indicates it. In what other country, on sleety winter nights, would provincial and bucolic populations have gone forth in hundreds for the cold comfort of a literary discourse? The distillation anywhere else would certainly have appeared too thin, the appeal too special. But for many years the American people of the middle regions, outside of a few cities, had in the most rigorous seasons no other recreation. A gentleman, grave or gay, in a bare room, with a manuscript, before a desk, offered the reward of toil, the refreshment of pleasure, to the young, the middle-aged, and the old of both sexes. The hour was brightest, doubtless, when the gentleman was gay, like Doctor Oliver Wendell Holmes. But Emerson's gravity never sapped his career, any more than it chilled the regard in which he was held among those who were particularly his own people. It was impossible to be more honored and cherished, far and near, than he was during his long residence in Concord, or more looked upon as the principal gentleman in the place. This was

conspicuous to the writer of these remarks on the occasion of the curious, sociable, cheerful public funeral made for him in 1883 by all the countryside, arriving, as for the last honors to the first citizen, in trains, in wagons, on foot, in multitudes. It was a popular manifestation, the most striking I have ever seen provoked by the death of a man of letters.

If a picture of that singular and very illustrative institution the old American lecture system would have constituted a part of the filling-in of the ideal memoir of Emerson, I may further say, returning to the matter for a moment, that such a memoir would also have had a chapter for some of those Concord-haunting figures which are not so much interesting in themselves as interesting because for a season Emerson thought them so. And the pleasure of that would be partly that it would push us to inquire how interesting he did really think them. That is, it would bring up the question of his inner reserves and skepticisms, his secret ennui and ironies, the way he sympathized for courtesy and then, with his delicacy and generosity, in a world after all given much to the literal, let his courtesy pass for adhesion—a question particularly attractive to those for whom he has, in general, a fascination. Many entertaining problems of that sort present themselves for such readers: there is something indefinable for them in the mixture of which he was made—his fidelity as an interpreter of the so-called transcendental spirit and his freedom from all wish for any personal share in the effect of his ideas. He drops them, sheds them, diffuses them, and we feel as if there would be a grossness in holding him to anything so temporal as a responsibility. He had the advantage, for many years, of having the question of application assumed for him by Thoreau, who took upon himself to be, in the concrete, the sort of person that Emerson's "scholar" was in the abstract, and who paid for it by having a shorter life than that fine adumbration. The application, with Thoreau, was violent and limited (it became a matter of prosaic detail, the nonpayment of taxes, the nonwearing of a necktie, the preparation of one's food oneself, the practice of a rude sincerity—all things not of the essence),

so that, though he wrote some beautiful pages, which read like a translation of Emerson into the sounds of the field and forest and which no one who has ever loved nature in New England, or indeed anywhere, can fail to love, he suffers something of the *amoindrissement* of eccentricity. His master escapes that reduction altogether. I call it an advantage to have had such a pupil as Thoreau; because for a mind so much made up of reflection as Emerson's everything comes under that head which prolongs and reanimates the process—produces the return, again and yet again, on one's impressions. Thoreau must have had this moderating and even chastening effect. It did not rest, moreover, with him alone; the advantage of which I speak was not confined to Thoreau's case. In 1837 Emerson (in his journal) pronounced Mr. Bronson Alcott the most extraordinary man and the highest genius of his time: the sequence of which was that for more than forty years after that he had the gentleman living but half a mile away. The opportunity for the return, as I have called it, was not wanting.

His detachment is shown in his whole attitude toward the transcendental movement—that remarkable outburst of Romanticism on Puritan ground, as Mr. Cabot very well names it. Nothing can be more ingenious, more sympathetic and charming, than Emerson's account and definition of the matter in his lecture (of 1842) called "The Transcendentalist"; and yet nothing is more apparent from his letters and journals than that he regarded any such label or banner as a mere tiresome flutter. He liked to taste but not to drink—least of all to become intoxicated. He liked to explain the transcendentalists but did not care at all to be explained by them: a doctrine "whereof you know I am wholly guiltless," he says to his wife in 1842, "and which is spoken of as a known and fixed element, like salt or meal. So that I have to begin with endless disclaimers and explanations: 'I am not the man you take me for.'" He was never the man anyone took him for, for the simple reason that no one could possibly take him for the elusive, irreducible, merely gustatory spirit for which he took himself.

It is a sort of maxim with me never to harp on the omnipotence of limitations. Least of all do we need any suggestion of checks and measures; as if New England were anything else. . . . Of so many fine people it is true that being so much they ought to be a little more, and missing that are naught. It is a sort of King Renè period; there is no doing, but rare thrilling prophecy from bands of competing minstrels.

That is his private expression about a large part of a ferment in regard to which his public judgment was that

That indeed constitutes a new feature in their portrait, that they are the most exacting and extortionate critics. . . . These exacting children advertise us of our wants. There is no compliment, no smooth speech with them; they pay you only this one compliment of insatiable expectation; they aspire, they severely exact, and if they only stand fast in this watchtower, and stand fast unto the end, and without end, then they are terrible friends, whereof poet and priest cannot but stand in awe; and what if they eat clouds and drink wind, they have not been without service to the race of man.

That was saying the best for them, as he always said it for everything; but it was the sense of their being "bands of competing minstrels" and their camp being only a "measure and check," in a society too sparse for a synthesis, that kept him from wishing to don their uniform. This was after all but a misfitting imitation of his natural wear, and what he would have liked was to put that off—he did not wish to button it tighter. He said the best for his friends of the *Dial*, of Fruitlands, and Brook Farm, in saying that they were fastidious and critical; but he was conscious in the next breath that what there was around them to be criticized was mainly a negative. Nothing is more perceptible today than that their criticism produced no fruit—that it was little else than a very decent and innocent recreation—a kind of Puritan carnival. The New England world was for much the most part very busy, but the *Dial* and Fruitlands and Brook Farm were the amusement of the leisure class. Extremes meet, and as in older societies that class is known principally by its connection with castles and carriages,

so at Concord it came, with Thoreau and Mr. W. H. Channing, out of the cabin and the wood lot.

Emerson was not moved to believe in their fastidiousness as a productive principle even when they directed it upon abuses which he abundantly recognized. Mr. Cabot shows that he was by no means one of the professional abolitionists or philanthropists—never an enrolled “humanitarian.”

We talk frigidly of Reform until the walls mock us. It is that of which a man should never speak, but if he have cherished it in his bosom he should steal to it in darkness, as an Indian to his bride. . . . Does he not do more to abolish slavery who works all day steadily in his own garden, than he who goes to the abolition meeting and makes a speech? He who does his own work frees a slave.

I must add that even while I transcribe these words there comes to me the recollection of the great meeting in the Boston Music Hall, on the first day of 1863, to celebrate the signing by Mr. Lincoln of the proclamation freeing the Southern slaves—of the momentousness of the occasion, the vast excited multitude, the crowded platform and the tall, spare figure of Emerson, in the midst, reading out the stanzas that were published under the name of the Boston Hymn. They are not the happiest he produced for an occasion—they do not compare with the verses on the “embattled farmers,” read at Concord in 1857, and there is a certain awkwardness in some of them. But I well remember the immense effect with which his beautiful voice pronounced the lines—

Pay ransom to the owner
And fill the bag to the brim.
Who is the owner? The slave is owner,
And ever was. Pay *him!*

And Mr. Cabot chronicles the fact that the *gran' rifiuto*—the great backsliding of Mr. Webster when he cast his vote in Congress for the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850—was the one thing that ever moved him to heated denunciation. He felt Webster's apostasy as strongly as he had admired his genius.

"Who has not helped to praise him? Simply he was the one American of our time whom we could produce as a finished work of nature." There is a passage in his journal (not a rough jotting, but, like most of the entries in it, a finished piece of writing), which is admirably descriptive of the wonderful orator and is moreover one of the very few portraits, or even personal sketches, yielded by Mr. Cabot's selections. It shows that he could observe the human figure and "render" it to good purpose.

His splendid wrath, when his eyes become fire, is good to see, so intellectual it is—the wrath of the fact and the cause he espouses, and not at all personal to himself. . . . These village parties must be dishwater to him, yet he shows himself just good-natured, just nonchalant enough; and he has his own way, without offending anyone or losing any ground. . . . His expensiveness seems necessary to him; were he too prudent a Yankee it would be a sad deduction from his magnificence. I only wish he would not truckle [to the slaveholders]. I do not care how much he spends.

I doubtless appear to have said more than enough, yet I have passed by many of the passages I had marked for transcription from Mr. Cabot's volumes. There is one, in the first, that makes us stare as we come upon it, to the effect that Emerson "could see nothing in Shelley, Aristophanes, Don Quixote, Miss Austen, Dickens." Mr. Cabot adds that he rarely read a novel, even the famous ones (he has a point of contact here as well as, strangely enough, on two or three other sides with that distinguished moralist M. Ernest Renan, who, like Emerson, was originally a dissident priest and cannot imagine why people should write works of fiction); and thought Dante "a man to put into a museum, but not into your house; another Zerah Colburn; a prodigy of imaginative function, executive rather than contemplative or wise." The confession of an insensibility ranging from Shelley to Dickens and from Dante to Miss Austen and taking Don Quixote and Aristophanes on the way, is a large allowance to have to make for a man of letters, and may appear to confirm but slightly any claim of

intellectual hospitality and general curiosity put forth for him. The truth was that, sparely constructed as he was and formed not wastefully, not with material left over, as it were, for a special function, there were certain chords in Emerson that did not vibrate at all. I well remember my impression of this on walking with him in the autumn of 1872 through the galleries of the Louvre and, later that winter, through those of the Vatican: his perception of the objects contained in these collections was of the most general order. I was struck with the anomaly of a man so refined and intelligent being so little spoken to by works of art. It would be more exact to say that certain chords were wholly absent; the tune was played, the tune of life and literature, altogether on those that remained. They had every wish to be equal to their office, but one feels that the number was short—that some notes could not be given. Mr. Cabot makes use of a singular phrase when he says, in speaking of Hawthorne, for several years our author's neighbor at Concord and a little—a very little we gather—his companion, that Emerson was unable to read his novels—he thought them “not worthy of him.” This is a judgment odd almost to fascination—we circle round it and turn it over and over; it contains so elusive an ambiguity. How highly he must have esteemed the man of whose genius *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Scarlet Letter* gave imperfectly the measure, and how strange that he should not have been eager to read almost anything that such a gifted being might have let fall! It was a rare accident that made them live almost side by side so long in the same small New England town, each a fruit of a long Puritan stem, yet with such a difference of taste. Hawthorne's vision was all for the evil and sin of the world, a side of life as to which Emerson's eyes were thickly bandaged. There were points as to which the latter's conception of right could be violated, but he had no great sense of wrong—a strangely limited one, indeed, for a moralist—no sense of the dark, the foul, the base. There were certain complications in life which he never suspected. One asks oneself whether that is why he did not care for Dante and Shelley

and Aristophanes and Dickens, their works containing a considerable reflection of human perversity. But that still leaves the indifference to Cervantes and Miss Austen unaccounted for.

It has not, however, been the ambition of these remarks to account for everything, and I have arrived at the end without even pointing to the grounds on which Emerson justifies the honors of biography, discussion, and illustration. I have assumed his importance and continuance, and shall probably not be gainsaid by those who read him. Those who do not will hardly rub him out. Such a book as Mr. Cabot's subjects a reputation to a test—leads people to look it over and hold it up to the light, to see whether it is worth keeping in use or even putting away in a cabinet. Such a revision of Emerson has no relegating consequences. The result of it is once more the impression that he serves and will not wear out, and that indeed we cannot afford to drop him. His instrument makes him precious. He did something better than anyone else; he had a particular faculty, which has not been surpassed, for speaking to the soul in a voice of direction and authority. There have been many spiritual voices appealing, consoling, reassuring, exhorting, or even denouncing and terrifying, but none has had just that firmness and just that purity. It penetrates further, it seems to go back to the roots of our feelings, to where conduct and manhood begin; and moreover, to us today, there is something in it that says that it is connected somehow with the virtue of the world, has wrought and achieved, lived in thousands of minds, produced a mass of character and life. And there is this further sign of Emerson's singular power, that he is a striking exception to the general rule that writings live in the last resort by their form; that they owe a large part of their fortune to the art with which they have been composed. It is hardly too much, or too little, to say of Emerson's writings in general that they were not composed at all. Many and many things are beautifully said; he had felicities, inspirations, unforgettable phrases; he had frequently an exquisite eloquence.

O my friends, there are resources in us on which we have not yet drawn. There are men who rise refreshed on hearing

a threat; men to whom a crisis which intimidates and paralyzes the majority—demanding not the faculties of prudence and thrift, but comprehension, immovableness, the readiness of sacrifice, come graceful and beloved as a bride. . . . But these are heights that we can scarce look up to and remember without contrition and shame. Let us thank God that such things exist.

None the less we have the impression that that search for a fashion and a manner on which he was always engaged never really came to a conclusion; it draws itself out through his later writings—it drew itself out through his later lectures, like a sort of renunciation of success. It is not on these, however, but on their predecessors, that his reputation will rest. Of course the way he spoke was the way that was on the whole most convenient to him; but he differs from most men of letters of the same degree of credit in failing to strike us as having achieved a style. This achievement is, as I say, usually the bribe or toll money on the journey to posterity; and if Emerson goes his way, as he clearly appears to be doing, on the strength of his message alone, the case will be rare, the exception striking, and the honor great.

ÉMILE ZOLA *

If it be true that the critical spirit today, in presence of the rising tide of prose fiction, a watery waste out of which old standards and landmarks are seen barely to emerge, like chimneys and the tops of trees in a country under flood—if it be true that the anxious observer, with the water up to his chin, finds himself asking for the *reason* of the strange phenomenon, for its warrant and title, so we likewise make out that these credentials rather fail to float on the surface. We live in a world of wanton and importunate fable, we breathe its air and consume its fruits; yet who shall say that we are able, when invited, to account for our preferring it so largely to the world of fact? To do so would be to make some adequate statement of the good the product in question does us. What does it do for our life, our mind, our manners, our morals—what does it do that history, poetry, philosophy may not do, as well or better, to warn, to comfort, and command the countless thousands for whom and by whom it comes into being? We seem too often left with our riddle on our hands. The lame conclusion on which we retreat is that “stories” are multiplied, circulated, paid for, on the scale of the present hour, simply because people “like” them. As to why people *should* like anything so loose and mean as the preponderant mass of the “output,” so little indebted for the magic of its action to any mystery in the making, is more than the actual state of our perceptions enables us to say.

This bewilderment might be our last word if it were not for the occasional occurrence of accidents especially appointed to straighten out a little our tangle. We are reminded that, if the unnatural prosperity of the wanton fable cannot be adequately explained, it can at least be illustrated with a sharpness that is practically an argument. An abstract solution failing, we en-

* From *Notes on Novelists, with Some Other Notes*, by Henry James (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914). Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

counter it in the concrete. We catch, in short, a new impression—or, to speak more truly, we recover an old one. It was always there to be had, but we ourselves throw off an oblivion, an indifference, for which there are plenty of excuses. We become conscious, for our profit, of a *case*, and we see that our mystification came from the way cases had appeared for so long to fail us. None of the shapeless forms about us for the time had attained to the dignity of one. The one I am now conceiving as suddenly effective—for which I fear I must have been regarding it as somewhat in eclipse—is that of Émile Zola, whom, as a manifestation of the sort we are considering, three or four striking facts have lately combined to render more objective and, so to speak, more massive. His close connection with the most resounding of recent public quarrels; his premature and disastrous death; above all, at the moment I write, the appearance of his last-finished novel, bequeathed to his huge public from beyond the grave—these rapid events have thrust him forward and made him loom abruptly larger; much as if our pedestrian critic, treading the dusty highway, had turned a sharp corner.

It is not assuredly that Zola has ever been veiled or unapparent; he had, on the contrary, been digging his field these thirty years and for all passers to see, with an industry that kept him, after the fashion of one of the grand, grim sowers or reapers of his brother of the brush, or at least of the canvas, Jean-François Millet, duskily outlined against the sky. He was there in the landscape of labor—he had always been; but he was there as a big natural or pictorial feature, a spreading tree, a battered tower, a lumpish, round-shouldered, useful hayrick, confounded with the air and the weather, the rain and the shine, the day and the dusk, merged more or less, as it were, in the play of the elements themselves. We had got used to him, and, thanks in a measure just to this stoutness of his presence, to the long regularity of his performance, had come to notice him hardly more than the dwellers in the marketplace notice the quarters struck by the town clock. On top of all accordingly, for our skeptical mood, the sense of his

work—a sense determined afresh by the strange climax of his personal history—rings out almost with violence as a reply to our wonder. It is as if an earthquake or some other rude interference had shaken from the town clock a note of such unusual depth as to compel attention. We therefore once more give heed, and the result of this is that we feel ourselves after a little probably as much enlightened as we can hope ever to be. We have worked round to the so marked and impressive anomaly of the adoption of the futile art by one of the stoutest minds and stoutest characters of our time. This extraordinarily robust worker has found it good enough for him, and if the fact is, as I say, anomalous, we are doubtless helped to conclude that by its anomalies, in future, the bankrupt business, as we are so often moved to pronounce it, will most recover credit.

What is at all events striking for us, critically speaking, is that, in the midst of the dishonor it has gradually harvested by triumphant vulgarity of practice, its pliancy and applicability can still plead for themselves. The curious contradiction stands forth for our relief—the circumstance that thirty years ago a young man of extraordinary brain and indomitable purpose, wishing to give the measure of these endowments in a piece of work supremely solid, conceived and sat down to *Les Rougon-Macquart* rather than to an equal task in physics, mathematics, politics, or economics. He saw his undertaking, thanks to his patience and courage, practically to a close; so that it is exactly neither of the so-called constructive sciences that happens to have had the benefit, intellectually speaking, of one of the few most constructive achievements of our time. There then, provisionally at least, we touch bottom; we get a glimpse of the pliancy and variety, the ideal of vividness, on behalf of which our equivocal form may appeal to a strong head. In the name of what ideal on its own side, however, does the strong head yield to the appeal? What is the logic of its so deeply committing itself? Zola's case seems to tell us, as it tells us other things. The logic is in its huge freedom of adjustment to the temperament of the worker, which it carries, so to say, as no other vehicle can do. It expresses fully and

directly the whole man, and big as he may be it can still be big enough for him without becoming false to its type. We see this truth made strong, from beginning to end, in Zola's work; we see the temperament, we see the whole man, with his size and all his marks, stored and packed away in the huge hold of *Les Rougon-Macquart* as a cargo is packed away on a ship. His personality is the thing that finally pervades and prevails, just as so often on a vessel the presence of the cargo makes itself felt for the assaulted senses. What has most come home to me in reading him over is that a scheme of fiction so conducted is in fact a capacious vessel. It can carry anything—with art and force in the stowage; nothing in this case will sink it. And it is the only form for which such a claim can be made. All others have to confess to a smaller scope—to selection, to exclusion, to the danger of distortion, explosion, combustion. The novel has nothing to fear but sailing too light. It will take aboard all we bring, in good faith, to the dock.

An intense vision of this truth must have been Zola's comfort from the earliest time—the years immediately following the crash of the Empire, during which he settled himself to the tremendous task he had mapped out. No finer act of courage and confidence, I think, is recorded in the history of letters. The critic in sympathy with him returns again and again to the great wonder of it, in which something so strange is mixed with something so august. Entertained and carried out almost from the threshold of manhood, the high project, the work of a lifetime, announces beforehand its inevitable weakness and yet speaks in the same voice for its admirable, its almost unimaginable strength. The strength was in the young man's very person—in his character, his will, his passion, his fighting temper, his aggressive lips, his squared shoulders (when he "sat up"), and overweening confidence; his weakness was in that inexperience of life from which he proposed not to suffer, from which he in fact suffered on the surface remarkably little, and from which he was never to suspect, I judge, that he had suffered at all. I may mention for the interest of it that, meeting

him during his first short visit to London—made several years before his stay in England during the Dreyfus trial—I received a direct impression of him that was more informing than any previous study. I had seen him a little, in Paris, years before that, when this impression was a perceptible promise, and I was now to perceive how time had made it good. It consisted, simply stated, in his fairly bristling with the betrayal that nothing whatever had happened to him in life but to write *Les Rougon-Macquart*. It was even for that matter almost more as if *Les Rougon-Macquart* had written *him*, written him as he stood and sat, as he looked and spoke, as the long, concentrated, merciless effort had made and stamped and left him. Something very fundamental was to happen to him in due course, it is true, shaking him to his base; fate was not wholly to cheat him of an independent evolution. Recalling him from this London hour one strongly felt during the famous “Affair” that his outbreak in connection with it was the act of a man with arrears of personal history to make up, the act of a spirit for which life, or for which at any rate freedom, had been too much postponed, treating itself at last to a luxury of experience.

I welcomed the general impression at all events—I intimately entertained it; it represented so many things, it suggested, just as it was, such a lesson. You could neither have everything nor be everything—you had to choose; you could not at once sit firm at your job and wander through space inviting initiations. The author of *Les Rougon-Macquart* had had all those, certainly, that this wonderful company could bring him; but I can scarce express how it was implied in him that his time had been fruitfully passed with *them* alone. His artistic evolution struck one thus as, in spite of its magnitude, singularly simple, and evidence of the simplicity seems further offered by his last production, of which we have just come into possession. *Vérité* truly does give the measure, makes the author’s high maturity join hands with his youth, marks the rigid straightness of his course from point to point. He had seen his horizon and his fixed goal from the first, and no cross scent, no new distance,

no blue gap in the hills to right or to left ever tempted him to stray. *Vérité*, of which I shall have more to say, is in fact, as a moral finality and the crown of an edifice, one of the strangest possible performances. Machine-minted and made good by an immense expertness, it yet makes us ask how, for disinterested observation and perception, the writer had used so much time and so much acquisition, and how he can all along have handled so much material without some larger subjective consequence. We really rub our eyes, in other words, to see so great an intellectual adventure as *Les Rougon-Macquart* come to its end in deep desert sand. Difficult truly to read, because showing him at last almost completely a prey to the danger that had for a long time more and more dogged his steps, the danger of the mechanical, all confident and triumphant, the book is nevertheless full of interest for a reader desirous to penetrate. It speaks with more distinctness of the author's temperament, tone, and manner than if, like several of his volumes, it achieved or enjoyed a life of its own. Its heavy completeness, with all this, as of some prodigiously neat, strong, and complicated scaffolding constructed by a firm of builders for the erection of a house whose foundations refuse to bear it and that is unable therefore to rise—its very betrayal of a method and a habit more than adequate, on past occasions, to similar ends, carries us back to the original rare exhibition, the grand assurance and grand patience with which the system was launched.

If it topples over—the system—by its own weight, in these last applications of it, that only makes the history of its prolonged success the more curious and, speaking for myself, the spectacle of its origin more attaching. Readers of my generation will remember well the publication of *La Conquête de Plassans* and the portent, indefinable but irresistible, after perusal of the volume, conveyed in the general rubric under which it was a first installment, *Natural and Social History of a Family under the Second Empire*. It squared itself there at its ease, the announcement, from the first, and we were to learn promptly enough what a fund of life it masked. It was like the mouth of a cave with a signboard hung above, or better still perhaps

like the big booth at a fair with the name of the show across the flapping canvas. One strange animal after another stepped forth into the light, each in its way a monster bristling and spotted, each a curiosity of that "natural history" in the name of which we were addressed, though it was doubtless not till the issue of *L'Assommoir* that the true type of the monstrous seemed to be reached. The enterprise, for those who had attention, was even at a distance impressive, and the nearer the critic gets to it retrospectively the more so it becomes. The pyramid had been planned and the site staked out, but the young builder stood there, in his sturdy strength, with no equipment save his two hands and, as we may say, his wheelbarrow and his trowel. His pile of material—of stone, brick, and rubble, or whatever—was of the smallest, but this he apparently felt as the least of his difficulties. Poor, uninstructed, unacquainted, unintroduced, he set up his subject wholly from the outside, proposing to himself wonderfully to get into it, into its depths, as he went.

If we imagine him asking himself what he knew of the "social" life of the Second Empire to start with, we imagine him also answering in all honesty: "I have my eyes and my ears—I have all my senses: I have what I've seen and heard, what I've smelled and tasted and touched. And then I've my curiosity and my pertinacity; I've libraries, books, newspapers, witnesses, the material, from step to step, of an *enquête*. And then I've my genius—that is, my imagination, my passion, my sensibility to life. Lastly I've my method, and that will be half the battle. Best of all perhaps even, I've plentiful lack of doubt." Of the absence in him of a doubt, indeed of his inability, once his direction taken, to entertain so much as the shadow of one, *Vérité* is a positive monument—which again represents in this way the unity of his tone and the meeting of his extremes. If we remember that his design was nothing if not architectural, that a "majestic whole," a great balanced *façade*, with all its orders and parts, that a singleness of mass and a unity of effect, in fine, were before him from the first, his notion of picking up his bricks as he proceeded becomes, in operation, heroic. It

is not in the least as a record of failure for him that I note this particular fact of the growth of the long series as on the whole the liveliest interest it has to offer. "I don't know my subject, but I must live into it; I don't know life, but I must learn it as I work"—that attitude and program represent, to my sense, a drama more intense on the worker's own part than any of the dramas he was to invent and put before us.

It was the fortune, it was in a manner the doom, of Les Rougon-Macquart to deal with things almost always in gregarious form, to be a picture of *numbers*, of classes, crowds, confusions, movements, industries—and this for a reason of which it will be interesting to attempt some account. The individual life is, if not wholly absent, reflected in coarse and common, in generalized terms; whereby we arrive precisely at the oddity just named, the circumstance that, looking out somewhere, and often woefully athirst, for the taste of fineness, we find it not in the fruits of our author's fancy, but in a different matter altogether. We get it in the very history of his effort, the image itself of his lifelong process, comparatively so personal, so spiritual even, and, through all its patience and pain, of a quality so much more distinguished than the qualities he succeeds in attributing to his figures even when he most aims at distinction. There can be no question, in these narrow limits, of my taking the successive volumes one by one—all the more that our sense of the exhibition is as little as possible an impression of parts and books, of particular "plots" and persons. It produces the effect of a mass of imagery in which shades are sacrificed, the effect of character and passion in the lump or by the ton. The fullest, the most characteristic episodes affect us like a sounding chorus or procession, as with a hubbub of voices and a multitudinous tread of feet. The setter of the mass into motion, he himself, in the crowd, figures best, with whatever queer idiosyncrasies, excrescences, and gaps, a being of a substance akin to our own. Taking him as we must, I repeat, for quite heroic, the interest of detail in him is the interest of his struggle at every point with his problem.

The sense for crowds and processions, for the gross and the

general, was largely the *result* of this predicament, of the disproportion between his scheme and his material—though it was certainly also in part an effect of his particular turn of mind. What the reader easily discerns in him is the sturdy resolution with which breadth and energy supply the place of penetration. He rests to his utmost on his documents, devours and assimilates them, makes them yield him extraordinary appearances of life; but in his way he too improvises in the grand manner, the manner of Walter Scott and of Dumas the elder. We feel that he *has* to improvise for his moral and social world, the world as to which vision and opportunity must come, if they are to come at all, unhurried and unhustled—must take their own time, helped undoubtedly more or less by blue books, reports and interviews, by inquiries “on the spot,” but never wholly replaced by such substitutes without a general disfigurement. Vision and opportunity reside in a personal sense and a personal history, and no short cut to them in the interest of plausible fiction has ever been discovered. The short cut, it is not too much to say, was with Zola the subject of constant ingenious experiment, and it is largely to this source, I surmise, that we owe the celebrated element of his grossness. He was *obliged* to be gross, on his system, or neglect to his cost an invaluable aid to representation, as well as one that apparently struck him as lying close at hand; and I cannot withhold my frank admiration from the courage and consistency with which he faced his need.

His general subject in the last analysis was the nature of man; in dealing with which he took up, obviously, the harp of most numerous strings. His business was to make these strings sound true, and there were none that he did not, so far as his general economy permitted, persistently try. What happened then was that many—say about half, and these, as I have noted, the most silvered, the most golden—refused to give out their music. They would only sound false, since (as with all his earnestness he must have felt) he could command them, through want of skill, of practice, of ear, to none of the right harmony. What therefore was more natural than that, still splendidly

bent on producing his illusion, he should throw himself on the strings he might thump with effect, and should work them, as our phrase is, for all they were worth? The nature of man, he had plentiful warrant for holding, is an extraordinary mixture, but the great thing was to represent a sufficient part of it to show that it was solidly, palpably, commonly the nature. With this preoccupation he doubtless fell into extravagance—there was clearly so much to lead him on. The coarser side of his subject, based on the community of all the instincts, was for instance the more practicable side, a sphere the vision of which required but the general human, scarcely more than the plain physical, initiation, and dispensed thereby conveniently enough with special introductions or revelations. A free entry into this sphere was undoubtedly compatible with a youthful career as hampered right and left even as Zola's own.

He was in prompt possession thus of the range of sympathy that he *could* cultivate, though it must be added that the complete exercise of that sympathy might have encountered an obstacle that would somewhat undermine his advantage. Our friend might have found himself able, in other words, to pay to the instinctive, as I have called it, only such tribute as protesting taste (his own dose of it) permitted. Yet there it was again that fortune and his temperament served him. Taste as he knew it, taste as his own constitution supplied it, proved to have nothing to say to the matter. His own dose of the precious elixir had no perceptible regulating power. Paradoxical as the remark may sound, this accident was positively to operate as one of his greatest felicities. There are parts of his work, those dealing with romantic or poetic elements, in which the inactivity of the principle in question is sufficiently hurtful; but it surely should not be described as hurtful to such pictures as *Le Ventre de Paris*, as *L'Assommoir*, as *Germinal*. The conception on which each of these productions rests is that of a world with which taste has nothing to do, and though the act of representation may be justly held, as an artistic act, to involve its presence, the discrimination would probably have been in fact, given the particular illusion sought, more detrimental

than the deficiency. There was a great outcry, as we all remember, over the rank materialism of *L'Assommoir*, but who cannot see today how much a milder infusion of it would have told against the close embrace of the subject aimed at? *L'Assommoir* is the nature of man—but not his finer, nobler, cleaner, or more cultivated nature; it is the image of his free instincts, the better and the worse, the better struggling as they can, gasping for light and air, the worse making themselves at home in darkness, ignorance, and poverty. The whole handling makes for emphasis and scale, and it is not to be measured how, as a picture of conditions, the thing would have suffered from timidity. The qualification of the painter was precisely his stoutness of stomach, and we scarce exceed in saying that to have taken in and given out again less of the infected air would, with such a resource, have meant the waste of a faculty.

I may add in this connection, moreover, that refinement of intention did on occasion and after a fashion of its own unmistakably preside at these experiments; making the remark in order to have done once for all with a feature of Zola's literary physiognomy that appears to have attached the gaze of many persons to the exclusion of every other. There are judges in these matters so perversely preoccupied that for them to see anywhere the "improper" is for them straightway to cease to see anything else. The said improper, looming supremely large and casting all the varieties of the proper quite into the shade, suffers thus in their consciousness a much greater extension than it ever claimed, and this consciousness becomes, for the edification of many and the information of a few, a colossal reflector and record of it. Much may be said, in relation to some of the possibilities of the nature of man, of the nature in especial of the "people," on the defect of our author's sense of proportion. But the sense of proportion of many of those he has scandalized would take us further yet. I recall at all events as relevant—for it comes under a very attaching general head—two occasions of long ago, two Sunday afternoons in Paris, on which I found the question of intention very curiously lighted. Several men of letters of a group in which

almost every member either had arrived at renown or was well on his way to it, were assembled under the roof of the most distinguished of their number, where they exchanged free confidences, on current work, on plans and ambitions, in a manner full of interest for one never previously privileged to see artistic conviction, artistic passion (at least on the literary ground) so systematic and so articulate. "Well, I on my side," I remember Zola's saying, "am engaged on a book, a study of the *mœurs* of the people, for which I am making a collection of all the 'bad words,' the *gros mots*, of the language, those with which the vocabulary of the people, those with which their familiar talk, bristles." I was struck with the tone in which he made the announcement—without bravado and without apology, as an interesting idea that had come to him and that he was working, really to arrive at character and particular truth, with all his conscience; just as I was struck with the unqualified interest that his plan excited. It was *on a* plan that he was working—formidably, almost grimly, as his fatigued face showed; and the whole consideration of this interesting element partook of the general seriousness.

But there comes back to me also as a companion piece to this another day, after some interval, on which the interest was excited by the fact that the work for love of which the brave license had been taken was actually under the ban of the daily newspaper that had engaged to "serialize" it. Publication had definitively ceased. The thing had run a part of its course, but it had outrun the courage of editors and the curiosity of subscribers—that stout curiosity to which it had evidently in such good faith been addressed. The chorus of contempt for the ways of such people, their pusillanimity, their superficiality, vulgarity, intellectual platitude, was the striking note on this occasion; for the journal impugned had declined to proceed and the serial, broken off, been obliged, if I am not mistaken, to seek the hospitality of other columns, secured indeed with no great difficulty. The composition so qualified for future fame was none other, as I was later to learn, than *L'Assommoir*; and my reminiscence has perhaps no greater point than in

connecting itself with a matter always dear to the critical spirit, especially when the latter has not too completely elbowed out the romantic—the matter of the “origins,” the early consciousness, early steps, early tribulations, early obscurity, as so often happens, of productions finally crowned by time.

Their greatness is for the most part a thing that has originally begun so small; and this impression is particularly strong when we have been in any degree present, so to speak, at the birth. The course of the matter is apt to tend preponderantly in that case to enrich our stores of irony. In the eventual conquest of consideration by an abused book we recognize, in other terms, a drama of romantic interest, a drama often with large comic no less than with fine pathetic interweavings. It may, of course, be said in this particular connection that *L'Assommoir* had not been one of the literary things that creep humbly into the world. Its “success” may be cited as almost insolently prompt, and the fact remains true if the idea of success be restricted, after the inveterate fashion, to the idea of circulation. What remains truer still, however, is that for the critical spirit circulation mostly matters not the least little bit, and it is of the success with which the history of Gervaise and Coupeau nestles in *that* capacious bosom, even as the just man sleeps in Abraham’s, that I here speak. But it is a point I may better refer to a moment hence.

Though a summary study of Zola need not too anxiously concern itself with book after book—always with a partial exception from this remark for *L'Assommoir*—groups and varieties none the less exist in the huge series, aids to discrimination without which no measure of the presiding genius is possible. These divisions range themselves to my sight, roughly speaking, however, as scarce more than three in number—I mean if the ten volumes of the *Œuvres critiques* and the *Théâtre* be left out of account. The critical volumes in especial abound in the characteristic, as they were also a wondrous addition to his sum of achievement during his most strenuous years. But I am forced not to consider them. The two groups constituted after the close of *Les Rougon-Macquart*—*Les Trois villes* and

the incomplete *Quatre Évangiles*—distribute themselves easily among the three types, or, to speak more exactly, stand together under one of the three. This one, so comprehensive as to be the author's main exhibition, includes to my sense all his best volumes—to the point in fact of producing an effect of distinct inferiority for those outside of it, which are, luckily for his general credit, the less numerous. It is so inveterately pointed out in any allusion to him that one shrinks, in repeating it, from sounding flat; but as he was admirably equipped from the start for the evocation of number and quantity, so those of his social pictures that most easily surpass the others are those in which appearances, the appearances familiar to him, are at once most magnified and most multiplied.

To make his characters swarm, and to make the great central thing they swarm about "as large as life," portentously, heroically big, that was the task he set himself very nearly from the first, that was the secret he triumphantly mastered. Add that the big central thing was always some highly representative institution or industry of the France of his time, some seated Moloch of custom, of commerce, of faith, lending itself to portrayal through its abuses and excesses, its idol face and great devouring mouth, and we embrace the main lines of his attack. In *Le Ventre de Paris* he had dealt with the life of the huge Halles, the general markets and their supply, the personal forces, personal situations, passions, involved in (strangest of all subjects) the alimentation of the monstrous city, the city whose victualing occupies so inordinately much of its consciousness. Paris richly gorged, Paris sublime and indifferent in her assurance (so all unlike poor Oliver's) of "more," figures here the theme itself, lies across the scene like some vast ruminant creature breathing in a cloud of parasites. The book was the first of the long series to show the full freedom of the author's hand, though *La Curée* had already been symptomatic. This freedom, after an interval, broke out on a much bigger scale in *L'Assommoir*, in *Au Bonheur des dames*, in *Germinal*, in *La Bête humaine*, in *L'Argent*, in *La Débâcle*, and then again, though more mechanically and with much of the glory gone,

in the more or less wasted energy of *Lourdes*, *Rome*, *Paris*, of *Fécondité*, *Travail*, and *Vérité*.

Au Bonheur des dames handles the colossal modern shop, traces the growth of such an organization as the Bon Marché or the Magasin-du-Louvre, sounds the abysses of its inner life, marshals its population, its hierarchy of clerks, counters, departments, divisions and subdivisions, plunges into the labyrinth of the mutual relations of its staff, and above all traces its ravage amid the smaller fry of the trade, of all the trades, pictures these latter gasping for breath in an air pumped clean by its mighty lungs. *Germinal* revolves about the coal mines of Flemish France, with the subterranean world of the pits for its central presence, just as *La Bête humaine* has for its protagonist a great railway and *L'Argent* presents in terms of human passion—mainly of human baseness—the fury of the Bourse and the monster of Credit. *La Débâcle* takes up with extraordinary breadth the first act of the Franco-Prussian War, the collapse at Sedan, and the titles of the six volumes of *The Three Cities* and *The Four Gospels* sufficiently explain them. I may mention, however, for the last lucidity, that among these *Fécondité* manipulates, with an amazing misapprehension of means to ends, of remedies to ills, no less thickly peopled a theme than that of the decline in the French birth rate, and that *Vérité* presents a fictive equivalent of the Dreyfus case, with a vast and elaborate picture of the battle in France between lay and clerical instruction. I may even further mention, to clear the ground, that with the close of *Les Rougon-Macquart* the diminution of freshness in the author's energy, the diminution of intensity and, in short, of quality, becomes such as to render sadly difficult a happy life with some of the later volumes. Happiness of the purest strain never indeed, in old absorptions of Zola, quite sat at the feast; but there was mostly a measure of coercion, a spell without a charm. From these last-named productions of the climax everything strikes me as absent but quantity (*Vérité*, for instance, is, with the possible exception of *Nana*, the longest of the list); though indeed there is something impressive in the way his quantity represents his patience.

There are efforts here at stout perusal that, frankly, I have been unable to carry through, and I should verily like, in connection with the vanity of these, to dispose on the spot of the sufficiently strange phenomenon constituted by what I have called the climax. It embodies, in fact, an immense anomaly; it casts back over Zola's prime and his middle years the queerest gray light of eclipse. Nothing moreover—nothing “literary”—was ever so odd as in this matter the whole turn of the case, the consummation so logical yet so unexpected. Writers have grown old and withered and failed; they have grown weak and sad; they have lost heart, lost ability, yielded in one way or another—the possible ways being so numerous—to the cruelty of time. But the singular doom of this genius—and which began to multiply its symptoms ten years before his death—was to find, with life, at fifty, still rich in him, strength only to undermine all the “authority” he had gathered. He had not grown old and he had not grown feeble; he had only grown all too wrongly insistent, setting himself to wreck, poetically, his so massive identity—to wreck it in the very waters in which he had formally arrayed his victorious fleet. (I say “poetically” on purpose to give him the just benefit of all the beauty of his power.) The process of the disaster, so full of the effect, though so without the intention, of perversity, is difficult to trace in a few words; it may best be indicated by an example or two of its action.

The example that perhaps most comes home to me is again connected with a personal reminiscence. In the course of some talk that I had with him during his first visit to England I happened to ask him what opportunity to travel (if any) his immense application had ever left him, and whether in particular he had been able to see Italy, a country from which I had either just returned, or which I was luckily—not having the *Natural History of a Family* on my hands—about to revisit. “All I’ve done, alas,” he replied, “was, the other year, in the course of a little journey to the south, to my own *pays*—all that has been possible was then to make a little dash as far as Genoa, a matter of only a few days.” *Le Docteur Pascal*, the

conclusion of Les Rougon-Macquart, had appeared shortly before, and it further befell that I asked him what plans he had for the future, now that, still *dans la force de l'âge*, he had so cleared the ground. I shall never forget the fine promptitude of his answer—"Oh, I shall begin at once *Les Trois villes*." "And which cities are they to be?" The reply was finer still—" Lourdes, Paris, Rome."

It was splendid for confidence and cheer, but it left me, I fear, more or less gaping, and it was to give me afterwards the key, critically speaking, to many a mystery. It struck me as breathing to an almost tragic degree the fatuity of those in whom the gods stimulate that vice to their ruin. He was an honest man—he had always bristled with it at every pore; but no artistic reverse was inconceivable for an adventurer who, stating in one breath that his knowledge of Italy consisted of a few days spent at Genoa, was ready to declare in the next that he had planned, on a scale, a picture of Rome. It flooded his career, to my sense, with light; it showed how he had marched from subject to subject and how he had "got up" each in turn—showing also how consummately he had reduced such getting-up to an artifice. He had success and a rare impunity behind him, but nothing would now be so interesting as to see if he could again play the trick. One would leave him, and welcome, Lourdes and Paris—he had already dealt, on a scale, with his own country and people. But was the adored Rome also to be his on such terms, the Rome he was already giving away before possessing an inch of it? One thought of one's own frequentations, saturations—a history of long years, and of how the effect of them had somehow been but to make the subject too august. Was he to find it easy through a visit of a month or two with "introductions" and a Baedeker?

It was not indeed that the Baedeker and the introduction didn't show, to my sense, at that hour, as extremely suggestive; they were positively a part of the light struck out by his announcement. They defined the system on which he had brought Les Rougon-Macquart safely into port. He had had his Baede-

ker and his introductions for *Germinal*, for *L'Assommoir*, for *L'Argent*, for *La Débâcle*, for *Au Bonheur des dames*; which advantages, which researches, had clearly been all the more in character for being documentary, extractive, a matter of *renseignements*, published or private, even when most mixed with personal impressions snatched, with *enquêtes sur les lieux*, with facts obtained from the best authorities, proud and happy to co-operate in so famous a connection. That was, as we say, all right, all the more that the process, to my imagination, became vivid and was wonderfully reflected back from its fruits. There *were* the fruits—so it hadn't been presumptuous. Presumption, however, was now to begin, and what omen mightn't there be in its beginning with such complacency? Well, time would show—as time in due course effectually did. *Rome*, as the second volume of *The Three Cities*, appeared, with high punctuality, a year or two later; and the interesting question, an occasion really for the moralist, was by that time not to recognize in it the mere triumph of a mechanical art, a "receipt" applied with the skill of long practice, but to do much more than this—that is, really to give a name to the particular shade of blindness that could constitute a trap for so great an artistic intelligence. The presumptuous volume, without sweetness, without antecedents, superficial and violent, has the minimum instead of the maximum of *value*; so that it betrayed or "gave away" just in this degree the state of mind on the author's part responsible for it. To put one's finger on the state of mind was to find out accordingly what was, as we say, the matter with him.

It seemed to me, I remember, that I found out as never before when, in its turn, *Fécondité* began the work of crowning the edifice. *Fécondité* is physiological, whereas *Rome* is not, whereas *Vérité* likewise is not; yet these three productions joined hands at a given moment to fit into the lock of the mystery the key of my meditation. They came to the same thing, to the extent of permitting me to read into them together the same precious lesson. This lesson may not, barely stated, sound remarkable; yet without being in possession of it I should have ventured on none of these remarks. "The matter with" Zola then, so far

as it goes, was that, as the imagination of the artist is in the best cases not only clarified but intensified by his equal possession of Taste (deserving here if ever the old-fashioned honor of a capital) so when he has lucklessly never inherited that auxiliary blessing the imagination itself inevitably breaks down as a consequence. There is simply no limit, in fine, to the misfortune of being tasteless; it does not merely disfigure the surface and the fringe of your performance—it eats back into the very heart and enfeebles the sources of life. When you have no taste you have no discretion, which is the conscience of taste, and when you have no discretion you perpetrate books like *Rome*, which are without intellectual modesty, books like *Fécondité*, which are without a sense of the ridiculous, books like *Vérité*, which are without the finer vision of human experience.

It is marked that in each of these examples the deficiency has been directly fatal. No stranger doom was ever appointed for a man so plainly desiring only to be just than the absurdity of not resting till he had buried the felicity of his past, such as it was, under a great, flat, leaden slab. *Vérité* is a plea for science, as science, to Zola, is *all* truth, the mention of any other kind being mere imbecility; and the simplification of the human picture to which his negations and exasperations have here conducted him was not, even when all had been said, credible in advance. The result is amazing when we consider that the finer observation is the supposed basis of all such work. It is not that even here the author has not a queer idealism of his own; this idealism is on the contrary so present as to show positively for the falsest of his simplifications. In *Fécondité* it becomes grotesque, makes of the book the most muscular mistake of *sense* probably ever committed. Where was the judgment of which experience is supposed to be the guarantee when the perpetrator could persuade himself that the lesson he wished in these pages to convey could be made immediate and direct, chalked, with loud taps and a still louder commentary, the sexes and generations all convoked, on the blackboard of the “family sentiment”?

I have mentioned, however, all this time but one of his categories. The second consists of such things as *La Fortune des Rougon* and *La Curée*, as *Eugène Rougon* and even *Nana*, as *Pot-Bouille*, as *L'Œuvre* and *La Joie de vivre*. These volumes may rank as social pictures in the narrower sense, studies, comprehensively speaking, of the manners, the morals, the miseries—for it mainly comes to that—of a bourgeoisie grossly materialized. They deal with the life of individuals in the liberal professions and with that of political and social adventures, and offer the personal character and career, more or less detached, as the center of interest. *La Curée* is an evocation, violent and “romantic,” of the extravagant appetites, the fever of the senses, supposedly fostered, for its ruin, by the hapless Second Empire, upon which general ills, turpitudes at large, were at one time so freely and conveniently fathered. *Eugène Rougon* carries out this view in the high color of a political portrait, not other than scandalous, for which one of the ministerial *âmes damnées* of Napoleon III, M. Rouher, is reputed, I know not how justly, to have sat. *Nana*, attaching itself by a hundred strings to a prearranged table of kinships, heredities, transmissions, is the vast, crowded *epos* of the daughter of the people filled with poisoned blood and sacrificed as well as sacrificing on the altar of luxury and lust; the panorama of such a “progress” as Hogarth would more definitely have named—the progress across the high plateau of “pleasure” and down the facile descent on the other side. *Nana* is truly a monument to Zola’s patience; the subject being so ungrateful, so formidably special, that the multiplication of illustrative detail, the plunge into pestilent depths, represents a kind of technical intrepidity.

There are other plunges, into different sorts of darkness; of which the aesthetic, even the scientific, even the ironic motive fairly escapes us—explorations of stagnant pools like that of *La Joie de vivre*, as to which, granting the nature of the curiosity and the substance labored in, the patience is again prodigious, but which make us wonder what pearl of philosophy, of suggestion, or just of homely recognition, the general picture, as

of rats dying in a hole, has to offer. Our various senses, sight, smell, sound, touch, are, as with Zola always, more or less convinced; but when the particular effect upon each of these is added to the effect upon the others the mind still remains bewilderedly unconscious of any use for the total. I am not sure, indeed, that the case is in this respect better with the productions of the third order—*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, *Une Page d'amour*, *Le Rêve*, *Le Docteur Pascal*—in which the appeal is more directly, is in fact quite earnestly, to the moral vision; so much, on such ground, was to depend precisely on those discriminations in which the writer is least at home. The volumes whose names I have just quoted are his express tribute to the "ideal," to the select and the charming—fair fruits of invention intended to remove from the mouth so far as possible the bitterness of the ugly things in which so much of the rest of his work had been condemned to consist. The subjects in question then are "idyllic" and the treatment poetic—concerned essentially to please on the largest lines and involving at every turn that salutary need. They are matters of conscious delicacy, and nothing might interest us more than to see what, in the shock of the potent forces enlisted, becomes of this shy element. Nothing might interest us more, literally, and might positively affect us more, even very nearly to tears, though indeed sometimes also to smiles, than to see the constructor of *Les Rougon-Macquart* trying, "for all he is worth," to be fine with fineness, finely tender, finely true—trying to be, as it is called, distinguished—in face of constitutional hindrance.

The effort is admirably honest, the tug at his subject splendidly strong; but the consequences remain of the strangest, and we get the impression that—as representing discriminations unattainable—they are somehow the price he paid. *Le Docteur Pascal*, for instance, which winds up the long chronicle on the romantic note, on the note of invoked beauty, in order to sweeten, as it were, the total draught—*Le Docteur Pascal*, treating of the erotic ardor entertained for each other by an uncle and his niece, leaves us amazed at such a conception of beauty, such an application of romance, such an estimate of

sweetness, a sacrifice to poetry and passion so little in order. Of course, we definitely remind ourselves, the whole long chronicle is explicitly a scheme, solidly set up and intricately worked out, lighted, according to the author's pretension, by "science," high, dry, and clear, and with each part involved and necessitated in all the other parts, each block of the edifice, each "*morceau de vie*" *physiologically* determined by previous combinations. "How can I help it," we hear the builder of the pyramid ask, "if experience (by which alone I proceed) shows me certain plain results—if, holding up the torch of my famous 'experimental method,' I find it stare me in the face that the union of certain types, the conflux of certain strains of blood, the intermarriage, in a word, of certain families, produces nervous conditions, conditions temperamental, psychical, and pathological, in which nieces *have* to fall in love with uncles and uncles with nieces? Observation and imagination, for any picture of life," he as audibly adds, "know no light but science, and are false to all intellectual decency, false to their own honor, when they fear it, dodge it, darken it. To pretend to any other guide or law is mere base humbug."

That is very well, and the value, in a hundred ways, of a mass of production conceived in such a spirit can never (when robust execution has followed) be small. But the formula really sees us no further. It offers a definition which is no definition. "Science" is soon said—the whole thing depends on the ground so covered. Science accepts surely *all* our consciousness of life; even, rather, the latter closes maternally round it—so that, becoming thus a force within us, not a force outside, it exists, it illuminates only as we apply it. We do emphatically apply it in art. But Zola would apparently hold that it much more applies *us*. On the showing of many of his volumes then it makes a dim use of us, and this we should still consider the case even were we sure that the article offered us in the majestic name is absolutely at one with its own pretension. This confidence we can on too many grounds never have. The matter is one of appreciation, and when an artist answers for science who answers for the artist—who at the least answers for

art? Thus it is with the mistakes that affect us, I say, as Zola's penalties. We are reminded by them that the game of art has, as the phrase is, to be played. It may not with any sure felicity for the result be both taken and left. If you insist on the common you must submit to the common; if you discriminate, on the contrary, you must, however invidious your discriminations may be called, trust to them to see you through.

To the common then Zola, often with splendid results, inordinately sacrifices, and this fact of its overwhelming him is what I have called his paying for it. In *L'Assommoir*, in *Germinal*, in *La Débâcle*, productions in which he must most survive, the sacrifice is ordered and fruitful, for the subject and the treatment harmonize and work together. He describes what he best feels, and feels it more and more as it naturally comes to him—quite, if I may allow myself the image, as we zoologically see some mighty animal, a beast of a corrugated hide and a portentous snout, soaking with joy in the warm ooze of an African riverside. In these cases everything matches, and “science,” we may be permitted to believe, has had little hand in the business. The author's perceptions go straight, and the subject, grateful and responsive, gives itself wholly up. It is no longer a case of an uncertain smoky torch, but of a personal vision, the vision of genius, springing from an inward source. Of this genius *L'Assommoir* is the most extraordinary record. It contains, with the two companions I have given it, all the best of Zola, and the three books together are solid ground—or would be could I now so take them—for a study of the particulars of his power. His strongest marks and features abound in them; *L'Assommoir*, above all, is (not least in respect to its bold, free linguistic reach, already glanced at) completely genial, while his misadventures, his unequipped and delusive pursuit of the life of the spirit and the tone of culture, are almost completely absent.

It is a singular sight enough, this of a producer of illusions whose interest for us is so independent of our pleasure or at least of our complacency—who touches us deeply even while he most “puts us off,” who makes us care for his ugliness and

yet himself at the same time pitilessly (pitilessly, that is, for *us*) makes a mock of it, who fills us with a sense of the rich which is none the less never the rare. Gervaise, the most immediately "felt," I cannot but think, of all his characters, is a lame washer-woman, loose and gluttonous, without will, without any principle of cohesion, the sport of every wind that assaults her exposed life, and who, rolling from one gross mistake to another, finds her end in misery, drink, and despair. But her career, as presented, has fairly the largeness that, throughout the chronicle, we feel as epic, and the intensity of her creator's vision of it and of the dense sordid life hanging about it is one of the great things the modern novel has been able to do. It has done nothing more completely constitutive and of a tone so rich and full and sustained. The tone of *L'Assommoir* is, for mere "keeping up," unsurpassable, a vast, deep, steady tide on which every object represented is triumphantly borne. It never shrinks nor flows thin, and nothing for an instant drops, dips, or catches; the high-water mark of sincerity, of the genial, as I have called it, is unfailingly kept.

For the artist in the same general "line" such a production has an interest almost inexpressible, a mystery, as to origin and growth, over which he fondly but rather vainly bends. How, after all, does it so get itself *done*?—the "done" being admirably the sign and crown of it. The light of the richer mind has been elsewhere, as I have sufficiently hinted, frequent enough, but nothing truly in all fiction was ever built so strong or made so dense as here. Needless to say there are a thousand things with more charm in their truth, with more beguilement of every sort, more prettiness of pathos, more innocence of drollery, for the spectator's sense of truth. But I doubt if there has ever been a more totally *represented* world, anything more founded and established, more provided for all round, more organized and carried on. It is a world practically workable, with every part as functional as every other, and with the parts all chosen for direct mutual aid. Let it not be said either that the equal constitution of parts makes for repletion or excess; the air circulates and the subject blooms; deadness comes in these matters

only when the right parts are absent and there is vain beating of the air in their place—the refuge of the fumbler incapable of the thing “done” at all.

The mystery I speak of, for the reader who reflects as he goes, is the wonder of the scale and energy of Zola’s assimilations. This wonder besets us, above all, throughout the three books I have placed first. How, all sedentary and “scientific,” did he get so *near*? By what art, inscrutable, immeasurable, indefatigable, did he arrange to make of his documents, in these connections, a use so vivified? Say he was “near” the subject of *L’Assommoir* in imagination, in more or less familiar impression, in temperament and humor, he could not, after all, have been near it in personal experience, and the copious personalism of the picture, not to say its frank animalism, yet remains its note and its strength. When the note had been struck in a thousand forms we had, by multiplication, as a kind of cumulative consequence, the finished and rounded book; just as we had the same result by the same process in *Germinal*. It is not, of course, that multiplication and accumulation, the extraordinary pair of legs on which he walks, are easily or directly consistent with his projecting himself morally; this immense diffusion, with its appropriation of everything it meets, affects us on the contrary as perpetually delaying access to what we may call the private world, the world of the individual. Yet since the individual—for it so happens—is simple and shallow, our author’s dealings with him, as met and measured, maintain their resemblance to those of the lusty bee who succeeds in plumping for an instant, of a summer morning, into every flower cup of the garden.

Grant—and the generalization may be emphatic—that the shallow and the simple are *all* the population of his richest and most crowded pictures, and that his “psychology,” in a psychology age, remains thereby comparatively coarse, grant this and we get but another view of the miracle. We see enough of the superficial among novelists at large, assuredly, without deriving from it, as we derive from Zola at his best, the concomitant impression of the solid. It is, in general—I mean among the

novelists at large—the impression of the *cheap*, which the author of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, honest man, never faithless for a moment to his own stiff standard, manages to spare us even in the prolonged sandstorm of *Vérité*. The Common is another matter; it is one of the forms of the superficial—pervading and consecrating all things in such a book as *Germinal*—and it only adds to the number of our critical questions. How in the world is it made, this deplorable, democratic, malodorous Common, so strange and so interesting? How is it taught to receive into its loins the stuff of the epic and still, in spite of that association with poetry, never depart from its nature? It is in the great lusty game he plays with the shallow and the simple that Zola's mastery resides, and we see, of course, that when values are small it takes innumerable items and combinations to make up the sum. In *L'Assommoir* and in *Germinal*, to some extent even in *La Débâcle*, the values are all, morally, personally, of the lowest—the highest is poor Gervaise herself, richly human in her generousities and follies—yet each is as distinct as a brass-headed nail.

What we come back to accordingly is the unprecedented case of such a combination of parts. Painters, of great schools, often of great talent, have responded liberally on canvas to the appeal of ugly things, of Spanish beggars, squalid and dusty-footed, of martyred saints or other convulsed sufferers, tortured and bleeding, of boors and louts soaking a Dutch proboscis in perpetual beer; but we had never before had to reckon with so literary a treatment of the mean and vulgar. When we others of the Anglo-Saxon race are vulgar, we are, handsomely and with the best conscience in the world, vulgar all through, too vulgar to be in any degree literary, and too much so therefore to be critically reckoned with at all. The French are different—they separate their sympathies, multiply their possibilities, observe their shades, remain more or less outside of their worst disasters. They mostly contrive to get the *idea*, in however dead a faint, down into the lifeboat. They may lose sight of the stars, but they save in some such fashion as that their intellectual souls. Zola's own reply to all puzzlements would have

been, at any rate, I take it, a straight summary of his inveterate professional habits. "It is all very simple—I produce, roughly speaking, a volume a year, and of this time some five months go to preparation, to special study. In the other months, with all my *cadres* established, I write the book. And I can hardly say which part of the job is stiffest."

The story was not more wonderful for him than that, nor the job more complex; which is why we must say of his whole process and its results that they constitute together perhaps the most extraordinary *imitation* of observation that we possess. Balzac appealed to "science" and proceeded by her aid; Balzac had *cadres* enough and a tabulated world, rubrics, relationships, and genealogies; but Balzac affects us in spite of everything as personally overtaken by life, as fairly hunted and run to earth by it. He strikes us as struggling and all but submerged, as beating over the scene such a pair of wings as were not soon again to be wielded by any visitor of his general air and as had not at all events attached themselves to Zola's rounded shoulders. His bequest is in consequence immeasurably more interesting, yet who shall declare that his adventure was in its greatness more successful? Zola "pulled it off," as we say, supremely, in that he never but once found himself obliged to quit, to our vision, his magnificent treadmill of the pigeonholed and documented—the region we may qualify as that of experience by imitation. His splendid economy saw him through; he labored to the end within sight of his notes and his charts.

The extraordinary thing, however, is that on the single occasion when, publicly—as his whole manifestation was public—life did swoop down on him, the effect of the visitation was quite perversely other than might have been looked for. His courage in the Dreyfus connection testified admirably to his ability to live for himself and out of the order of his volumes—little indeed as living at all might have seemed a question for one exposed, when his crisis was at its height and he was found guilty of "insulting" the powers that were, to be literally torn to pieces in the precincts of the Palace of Justice. Our point is that nothing was ever so odd as that these great moments

should appear to have been wasted, when all was said, for his creative intelligence. *Vérité*, as I have intimated, the production in which they might most have been reflected, is a production unrenewed and unrefreshed by them, spreads before us as somehow flatter and grayer, not richer and more relieved, by reason of them. They really arrived, I surmise, too late in the day; the imagination they might have vivified was already fatigued and spent.

I must not, moreover, appear to say that the power to evoke and present has not even on the dead level of *Vérité* its occasional minor revenges. There are passages, whole pages, of the old full-bodied sort, pictures that elsewhere in the series would in all likelihood have seemed abundantly convincing. Their misfortune is to have been discounted by our intensified, our finally fatal sense of the *procédé*. Quarreling with all conventions, defiant of them in general, Zola was yet inevitably to set up his own group of them—as, for that matter, without a sufficient collection, without their aid in simplifying and making possible, how could he ever have seen his big ship into port? Art welcomes them, feeds upon them always; no sort of form is practicable without them. It is only a question of what particular ones we use—to wage war on certain others and to arrive at particular forms. The convention of the blameless being, the thoroughly “scientific” creature possessed impeccably of all truth and serving as the mouthpiece of it and of the author’s highest complacencies, this character is, for instance, a convention inveterate and indispensable, without whom the “sympathetic” side of the work could never have been achieved. Marc in *Vérité*, Pierre Froment in *Lourdes* and in *Rome*, the wondrous representatives of the principle of reproduction in *Fécondité*, the exemplary painter of *L’Œuvre*, sublime in his modernity and paternity, the patient Jean Macquart of *La Débâcle*, whose patience is as guaranteed as the exactitude of a well-made watch, the supremely enlightened Docteur Pascal even, as I recall him, all amorous nepotism but all virtue too and all beauty of life—such figures show us the reasonable and the good not merely in the white light of the old George Sand novel and its improved

moralties, but almost in that of our childhood's nursery and schoolroom, that of the moral tale of Miss Edgeworth and Mr. Thomas Day.

Yet let not these restrictions be my last word. I had intended, under the effect of a reperusal of *La Débâcle*, *Germinal*, and *L'Assommoir*, to make no discriminations that should not be in our friend's favor. The long-drawn incident of the marriage of Gervaise and Cadet-Cassis, and that of the Homeric birthday feast later on in the laundress's workshop, each treated from beginning to end and in every item of their coarse comedy and humanity, still show the unprecedented breadth by which they originally made us stare, still abound in the particular kind and degree of vividness that helped them, when they appeared, to mark a date in the portrayal of manners. Nothing had then been so sustained and at every moment of its grotesque and pitiful existence lived into as the nuptial day of the Coupeau pair in especial, their fantastic processional pilgrimage through the streets of Paris in the rain, their bedraggled exploration of the halls of the Louvre Museum, lost as in the labyrinth of Crete, and their arrival at last, ravenous and exasperated, at the *guinguette* where they sup at so much a head, each paying, and where we sit down with them in the grease and the perspiration and succumb, half in sympathy, half in shame, to their monstrous pleasantries, acerbities, and miseries. I have said enough of the mechanical in Zola; here in truth is, given the elements, almost insupportably the sense of life. That effect is equally in the historic chapter of the miners in *Germinal*, another of those illustrative episodes, viewed as great passages to be "rendered," for which our author established altogether a new measure and standard of handling, a new energy and veracity, something since which the old trivialities and poverties of treatment of such aspects have become incompatible, for the novelist, with either rudimentary intelligence or rudimentary self-respect.

As for *La Débâcle*, finally, it takes its place with Tolstoi's very much more universal but very much less composed and condensed epic as an incomparably human picture of war. I have been rereading it, I confess, with a certain timidity, the

dread of perhaps impairing the deep impression received at the time of its appearance. I recall the effect it then produced on me as a really luxurious act of submission. It was early in the summer; I was in an old Italian town; the heat was oppressive, and one could but recline, in the lightest garments, in a great dim room and give oneself up. I like to think of the conditions and the emotion, which melt for me together into the memory I fear to imperil. I remember that in the glow of my admiration there was not a reserve I had ever made that I was not ready to take back. As an application of the author's system and his supreme faculty, as a triumph of what these things could do for him, how could such a performance be surpassed? The long, complex, horrific, pathetic battle, embraced, mastered, with every crash of its squadrons, every pulse of its thunder and blood resolved for us, by reflection, by communication from two of the humblest and obscurest of the military units, into immediate vision and contact, into deep human thrills of terror and pity—this bristling center of the book was such a piece of "doing" (to come back to our word) as could only shut our mouths. That doubtless is why a generous critic, nursing the sensation, may desire to drop for a farewell no term into the other scale. That our author was clearly great at congruous subjects—this may well be our conclusion. If the others, subjects of the private and intimate order, gave him more or less inevitably "away," they yet left him the great distinction that the more he could be promiscuous and collective, the more even he could (to repeat my imputation) illustrate our large natural allowance of health, heartiness and grossness, the more he could strike us as penetrating and true. It was a distinction not easy to win and that his name is not likely soon to lose.

II. FICTION

THE MADONNA OF THE FUTURE*

I

We had been talking about the masters who had achieved but a single masterpiece—the artists and poets who but once in their lives had known the divine afflatus and touched the high level of perfection. Our host had shown us a charming little cabinet picture by a painter whose name we had never heard, and who, after this single spasmodic bid for fame, had appeared to relapse into obscurity and mediocrity. There was some discussion as to the frequency of this inconsequence; during which I noted H—— sit silent, finishing his cigar with a meditative air and looking at the picture, which was being handed round the table. “I don’t know how common a case it is,” he said at last, “but I’ve seen it. I’ve known a poor fellow who painted his one masterpiece, and who”—he added with a smile—“didn’t even paint that. He made his bid for fame and missed it.” We all knew H—— for a clever man who had seen much of men and manners and had a great stock of reminiscences. Someone immediately questioned him further, and while I was engrossed with the raptures of my neighbor over the precious object in circulation he was induced to tell his tale. If I were to doubt whether it would bear repeating, I should only have to remember how that charming woman our hostess, who had left the table, ventured back, in rustling rose color, to pronounce our lingering a want of gallantry, and, then finding us under the spell, sank

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into her chair in spite of our cigars and heard the story out so graciously that when the catastrophe was reached she glanced across and showed me a tear in each of her beautiful eyes.

It relates to my youth and to Italy: two very fine things! (H—— began.) I had arrived late in the evening at Florence and, while I finished my bottle of wine at supper, had fancied that, tired traveler though I was, I might pay such a place a finer compliment than by going vulgarly to bed. A narrow passage wandered darkly away out of the little square before my hotel and looked as if it bored into the heart of Florence. I followed it and at the end of ten minutes emerged upon a great piazza filled only with the mild autumn moonlight. Opposite rose the Palazzo Vecchio, like some huge civic fortress, with the great bell tower springing from its embattled verge even as a mountain pine from the edge of a cliff. At the base, in the great projected shadow, gleamed certain dim sculptures which I wonderingly approached. One of the images, on the left of the palace door, was a magnificent colossus who shone through the dusky air like a sentinel roused by some alarm and in whom I at once recognized Michelangelo's famous David. I turned with a certain relief from his heroic sinister strength to a slender figure in bronze poised beneath the high, light loggia which opposes the free and elegant span of its arches to the dead masonry of the palace; a figure supremely shapely and graceful, markedly gentle almost, in spite of his holding out with his light nervous arm the snaky head of the slaughtered Gorgon. His name—as, unlike the great David, he still stands there—is Perseus, and you may read his story not in the Greek mythology but in the memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini. Glancing from one of these fine fellows to the other, I probably uttered some irrepressible commonplace of praise, for, as if provoked by my voice, a man rose from the steps of the loggia, where he had been sitting in the shadow, and addressed me in proper English—a small slim personage clad in some fashion of black velvet tunic (as it seemed) and with a mass of auburn hair, which shimmered in the moonlight, escaping from a little biretta of the *cinquecento*. In a tone

of the most insinuating deference he proceeded to appeal to me for my "impressions." He was romantic; fantastic, slightly unreal. Hovering in that consecrated neighborhood he might have passed for the genius of aesthetic hospitality—if the genius of aesthetic hospitality wasn't commonly some shabby little *custode* who flourishes a calico pocket handkerchief and openly resents the divided franc. This analogy was made none the less complete by his breaking into discourse as I threw myself diffidently back upon silence.

"I've known Florence long, sir, but I've never known her so lovely as tonight. It's as if the ghosts of her past were abroad in the empty streets. The present is sleeping; the past hovers about us like a dream made visible. Fancy the old Florentines strolling up in couples to pass judgment on the last performance of Michael, of Benvenuto! We should come in for a precious lesson if we might overhear what they say. The plainest burgher of them, in his cap and gown, had a taste in the matter. That was the prime of art, sir. The sun stood high in heaven, and his broad and equal blaze made the darkest places bright and the duller eyes clear. We live in the evening of time. We grope in the gray dusk, carrying each our poor little taper of selfish and painful wisdom, holding it up to the great models and to the dim idea, and seeing nothing but overwhelming greatness and dimness. The days of illumination are gone. But do you take my refreshing idea"—and he grew suddenly almost familiar in this visionary fervor—"my idea that the light of that time rests upon us here for an hour? I've never seen the David so grand, the Perseus so fair! Even the inferior productions of John of Bologna and of Baccio Bandinelli seem to realize the artist's dream. I feel as if the moonlit air were charged with the secrets of the masters, and as if, standing here in religious attention, we might—well, witness a revelation!" Perceiving at this moment, I suppose, my halting comprehension reflected in my puzzled face, this interesting rhapsodist paused and blushed. Then with a melancholy smile: "You think me a moonstruck charlatan, I suppose. It's not my habit to hang about the piazza and pounce upon innocent tourists. But tonight, I confess, I'm

under the charm. And then, somehow, I seemed to take you too for an artist!"

"I'm not an artist, I'm sorry to say, as you must understand the term. But pray make no apologies. I *am* also under the charm, and your eloquent remarks," I declared, "have only deepened it."

"If you're not an artist, you're worthy to be one!" he returned with flattering frankness. "A young man who arrives at Florence late in the evening and, instead of going prosaically to bed or hanging over the travelers' book at his hotel, walks forth without loss of time to render homage to these blest objects is a young man after my own heart!"

The mystery was suddenly solved; my friend was the most characteristic of compatriots. He would *have* to be one of "us," of the famished race—for we were at least a pair—to take the situation so to heart. "None the less so, I trust," I answered, "if the young man is a sordid New Yorker."

"New Yorkers have often been munificent patrons of art!" he answered urbanely.

For a moment I was alarmed. Was his irrepressible passion mere Yankee enterprise?—was he simply a desperate brother of the brush who had posted himself here to extort an "order" from a sauntering tourist? But I wasn't called to defend myself. A great brazen note broke suddenly from the far-off summit of the bell tower above us and sounded the first stroke of midnight. My companion started, apologized for detaining me, and prepared to retire. But he seemed to offer so lively a promise of further entertainment that I was loath to part with him and suggested we should proceed homeward together. He cordially assented; so we turned out of the Piazza, passed down before the statued arcade of the Uffizi, and came out upon the Arno. What course we took I hardly remember, but we roamed far and wide for an hour, my companion delivering by snatches a positively moon-touched aesthetic lecture. I listened in puzzled fascination, wondering who the deuce he might be. He confessed with a melancholy but all-respectful headshake to an origin identical with my own. "We're the disinherited of Art!

We're condemned to be superficial! We're excluded from the magic circle! The soil of American perception is a poor little barren artificial deposit! Yes, we're wedded to imperfection! An American, to excel, has just ten times as much to learn as a European! We lack the deeper sense! We have neither taste nor tact nor force! How *should* we have them? Our crude and garish climate, our silent past, our deafening present, the constant pressure about us of unlovely conditions, are as void of all that nourishes and prompts and inspires the artist as my sad heart is void of bitterness in saying so! We poor aspirants must live in perpetual exile."

"You seem fairly at home in exile," I made answer, "and Florence seems to me a very easy Siberia. But do you know my own thought? Nothing is so idle as to talk about our want of a nursing air, of a kindly soil, of opportunity, of inspiration, of the things that help. The only thing that helps is to do something fine. There's no law in our glorious Constitution against that. Invent, create, achieve. No matter if you've to study fifty times as much as one of these. What else are you an artist for? Be you our Moses," I added, laughing and laying my hand on his shoulder, "and lead us out of the house of bondage!"

"Golden words, golden words, young man!"—my friend rose to it beautifully. "'Invent, create, achieve'! Yes, that's our business; I know it well. Don't take me, in heaven's name, for one of your barren complainers, of the falsely fastidious, who have neither talent nor faith! I'm at work!"—and he glanced about him and lowered his voice as if this were quite a peculiar secret—"I'm at work night and day. I've undertaken, believe me, a creation. I'm no Moses; I'm only a poor patient artist; but it would be a fine thing if I were to cause some slender stream of beauty to flow in our thirsty land! Don't think me a monster of conceit," he went on as he saw me smile at the avidity with which he adopted my illustration; "I confess that I *am* in one of those moods when great things seem possible! This is one of my—shall I say inspired?—nights: I dream waking! When the south wind blows over Florence at midnight it seems to coax the soul from all the fair things locked away in her churches and

galleries; it comes into my own little studio with the moonlight; it sets my heart beating too deeply for rest. You see I'm always adding a thought to my conception. This evening I felt I couldn't sleep unless I had communed with the genius of Buonarroti!"

He seemed really to know his Florence through and through and had no need to tell me he loved her. I saw he was an old devotee and had taken her even from the first to his heart. "I owe her everything," he put it—"it's only since I came here that I've really lived, intellectually and aesthetically speaking. One by one all profane desires, all mere worldly aims, have dropped away from me and left me nothing but my pencil, my little notebook"—he tapped his breast pocket—"and the worship of the pure masters, those who were pure because they were innocent and those who were pure because they were strong!"

"And have you been very productive all this time?" I found myself too interested to keep from asking.

He was silent a while before replying. "Not in the vulgar sense! I've chosen never to manifest myself by imperfection. The good in every performance I've reabsorbed into the generative force of new creations; the bad—there's always plenty of that—I've religiously destroyed. I may say with some satisfaction that I've not added a grain to the rubbish of the world. As a proof of my conscientiousness"—and he stopped short, eyeing me with extraordinary candor, as if the proof were to be overwhelming—"I've never sold a picture! 'At least no merchant traffics in my heart!' Do you remember that divine line in Browning? My little studio has never been profaned by superficial feverish mercenary work. It's a temple of labor but of leisure! Art is long. If we work for ourselves, of course, we must hurry. If we work for *her* we must often pause. She can wait!"

This had brought us to my hotel door, somewhat to my relief, I confess, for I had begun to feel unequal to the society of a genius of this heroic strain. I left him, however, not without expressing a friendly hope that we should meet again. The next morning my curiosity had not abated; I was anxious to see

him by common daylight. I counted on meeting him in one of the many art haunts of the so rich little city, and I was gratified without delay. I found him in the course of the morning in the Tribune of the Uffizi—that little treasure chamber of world-famous things. He had turned his back on the *Venus de' Medici* and, with his arms resting on the rail that protects the pictures and his head buried in his hands, was lost in the contemplation of that superb neighboring triptych of Andrea Mantegna—a work which has neither the material splendor nor the commanding force of some of its neighbors, but which, glowing there with the loveliness of patient labor, suits possibly a more constant need of the soul. I looked at the picture for some time over his shoulder; at last, with a heavy sigh, he turned away and our eyes met. As he recognized me he colored for the consciousness of what I brought back: he recalled perhaps that he had made a fool of himself overnight. But I offered him my hand with a frankness that assured him I was no scoffer. I knew him by his great nimbus of red hair; otherwise he was much altered. His midnight mood was over, and he looked as haggard as an actor by daylight. He was much older than I had supposed, and had less bravery of costume and attitude. He seemed quite the poor patient artist he had proclaimed himself, and the fact that he had never sold a picture was more conceivable doubtless than commendable. His velvet coat was threadbare and his short, slouched hat, of an antique pattern, revealed a rustiness that marked it an “original” and not one of the picturesque reproductions that members of his craft sometimes affect. His eye was mild and heavy, and his expression singularly gentle and acquiescent; the more so for a certain pale facial spareness which I hardly knew whether to refer to the consuming fire of genius or to a meager diet. A very little talk, however, cleared his brow and brought back his flow.

“And this is your first visit to these enchanted halls?” he cried. “Happy, thrice happy youth!”—with which, taking me by the arm, he prepared to lead me to each of the pre-eminent works in turn and show me the flower of the array. Before we left the Mantegna, however, I felt him squeeze me and give it a

loving look. "*He* was not in a hurry," he murmured. "*He* knew nothing of 'raw Haste, half sister to Delay!'" How sound a critic he might have been didn't seem to me even then to concern me—it so served that he was an amusing one; overflowing with opinions and theories, sympathies and aversions, with disquisition and gossip and anecdote. He inclined more than I approved to the sentimental proposition, was too fond, I thought, of superfine shades and of discovering subtle intentions and extracting quintessences. At moments too he plunged into the sea of metaphysics and floundered a while in waters that were not for my breasting. But his abounding knowledge and frequent felicities told a touching story of long attentive hours in all such worshipful companies; there was a reproach to my wasteful saunterings in his systematic and exhaustive attack. "There are two moods," I remember his saying, "in which we may walk through galleries—the critical and the ideal. They seize us at their pleasure, and we can never tell which is to take its turn. The critical, oddly, is the genial one, the friendly, the condescending. It relishes the pretty trivialities of art, its vulgar cleverness, its conscious graces. It has a kindly greeting for anything which looks as if, according to his light, the painter had enjoyed doing it—for the little Dutch cabbages and kettles, for the taper fingers and breezy mantles of late-coming Madonnas, for the little blue-hilled, broken-bridged, pastoral, classical landscapes. Then there are the days of fierce, fastidious longing—solemn church feasts of the taste or the faith—when all vulgar effort and all petty success is a weariness and everything but the best, the best of the best, disgusts. In these hours we're relentless aristocrats of attitude. We'll not take Michael for granted, we'll not swallow Raphael whole!"

The gallery of the Uffizi is not only rich in its possessions, but peculiarly fortunate in that fine architectural accident or privilege which unites it—with the breadth of river and city between them—to the princely extent of the Pitti. The Louvre and the Vatican hardly give you such a sense of sustained enclosure as those long passages projected over street and stream to establish an inviolate transition between the two palaces of art. We

paced the clear tunnel in which those precious drawings by eminent hands hang chaste and gray above the swirl and murmur of the yellow Arno, and reached the grand-ducal, the palatial saloons. Grand-ducal as they are, they must be pronounced imperfect showrooms, since, thanks to their deep-set windows and their massive moldings, it is rather a broken light that reaches the pictured walls. But here the masterpieces hang thick, so that you see them in a deep diffused luster of their own. And the great chambers, with their superb dim ceilings, their outer wall in splendid shadow and the somber opposite glow of toned canvas and gleaming gold, make themselves almost as fine a picture as the Titians and Raphaels they imperfectly reveal. We lingered briefly before many a Raphael and Titian; but I saw my friend was impatient and I suffered him at last to lead me directly to the goal of our journey—the most tenderly fair of Raphael's virgins, the "Madonna of the Chair." Of all the fine pictures of the world, it was to strike me at once as the work with which criticism has least to do. None betrays less effort, less of the mechanism of success and of the irrepressible discord between conception and result that sometimes faintly invalidates noble efforts. Graceful, human, near to our sympathies as it is, it has nothing of manner, of method, nothing almost of style; it blooms there in a softness as rounded and as instinct with harmony as if it were an immediate exhalation of genius. The figure imposes on the spectator a spell of submission which he scarce knows whether he has given to heavenly purity or to earthly charm. He is intoxicated with the fragrance of the tenderest blossom of maternity that ever bloomed among men.

"That's what I call a fine picture," said my companion after we had gazed a while in silence. "I've a right to say so, for I've copied it so often and so carefully that I could repeat it now with my eyes shut. Other works are of Raphael: this *is* Raphael himself. Others you can praise, you can qualify, you can measure, explain, account for: this you can only love and admire. I don't know in what seeming he walked here below while this divine mood was upon him; but after it surely he could do nothing but die—this world had nothing more to

teach him. Think of it a while, my friend, and you'll admit that I'm not raving. Think of his seeing that spotless image not for a moment, for a day, in a happy dream or a restless fever fit, not as a poet in a five minutes' frenzy—time to snatch his phrase and scribble his immortal stanza; but for days together, while the slow labor of the brush went on, while the foul vapors of life interposed and the fancy ached with tension, fixed, radiant, distinct, as we see it now! What a master, certainly! But ah, what a seer!"

"Don't you imagine," I fear I profanely asked, "that he had a model, and that some pretty young woman——"

"As pretty a young woman as you please! It doesn't diminish the miracle. He took his hint of course, and the young woman possibly sat smiling before his canvas. But meanwhile the painter's idea had taken wings. No lovely human outline could charm it to vulgar fact. He saw the fair form made perfect; he rose to the vision without tremor, without effort of wing; he communed with it face to face and resolved into finer and lovelier truth the purity which completes it as the fragrance completes the rose. That's what they call idealism; the word's vastly abused, but the thing's good. It's my own creed at any rate. Lovely Madonna, model at once and muse, I call you to witness that I too am an idealist!"

"An idealist then"—and I really but wanted to draw him further out—"an idealist is a gentleman who says to Nature in the person of a beautiful girl: 'Go to, you're all wrong! Your fine's coarse, your bright's dim, your grace is gaucherie. This is the way you should have done it! Isn't the chance against him?'"

He turned on me at first almost angrily—then saw that I was but sowing the false to reap the true. "Look at that picture," he said, "and cease your irreverent mockery! Idealism is *that*! There's no explaining it; one must feel the flame. It says nothing to Nature, or to any beautiful girl, that they won't both forgive. It says to the fair woman: 'Accept me as your artist friend, lend me your beautiful face, trust me, help me, and your eyes shall be half my masterpiece.' No one so loves and respects

the rich realities of nature as the artist whose imagination intensifies them. He knows what a fact may hold—whether Raphael knew, you may judge by his inimitable portrait, behind us there, of Tommaso Inghirami—but his fancy hovers above it as Ariel in the play hovers above the sleeping prince. There's only one Raphael, but an artist may still be an artist. As I said last night, the days of illumination are gone; visions are rare; we've to look long to have them. But in meditation we may still cultivate the ideal; round it, smooth it, perfect it. The result, the result"—here his voice faltered suddenly and he fixed his eyes for a moment on the picture; when they met my own again they were full of tears—"the result may be less than this, but still it may be good, it may be *great*!" he cried with vehemence. "It may hang somewhere, through all the years, in goodly company, and keep the artist's memory warm. Think of being known to mankind after some such fashion as this; of keeping pace with the restless centuries and the changing world; of living on and on in the cunning of an eye and a hand that belong to the dust of ages, a delight and a law to remote generations; of making beauty more and more a force and purity more and more an example!"

"Heaven forbid," I smiled, "that I should take the wind out of your sails! But doesn't it occur to you that besides being strong in his genius Raphael was happy in a certain good faith of which we've lost the trick? There are people, I know, who deny that his spotless Madonnas are anything more than pretty blondes of that period, enhanced by the Raphaellesque touch, which they declare to be then as calculating and commercial as any other. Be that as it may, people's religious and aesthetic needs went arm in arm, and there was, as I may say, a demand for the Blessed Virgin, visible and adorable, which must have given firmness to the artist's hand. I'm afraid there's no demand now."

My friend momentarily stared—he shivered and shook his ears under this bucketful of cold water. But he bravely kept up his high tone. "There's always a demand—that ineffable type is one of the eternal needs of man's heart; only pious souls

long for it in silence, almost in shame. Let it appear and their faith grows brave. How *should* it appear in this corrupt generation? It can't be made to order. It could indeed when the order came trumpet-toned from the lips of the Church herself and was addressed to genius panting with inspiration. But it can spring now only from the soil of passionate labor and culture. Do you really fancy that while from time to time a man of complete artistic vision is born into the world such an image can perish? The man who paints it has painted everything. The subject admits of every perfection—form, color, expression, composition. It can be as simple as you please and yet as rich; as broad and free and yet as full of delicate detail. Think of the chance for flesh in the little naked, nestling child, irradiating divinity; of the chance for drapery in the chaste and ample garment of the mother. Think of the great story you compress into that simple theme. Think above all of the mother's face and its ineffable suggestiveness, of the mingled burden of joy and trouble, the tenderness turned to worship and the worship turned to far-seeing pity. Then look at it all in perfect line and lovely color, breathing truth and beauty and mastery."

"*Anch' io son pittore!*" I laughed. "Unless I'm mistaken *you* have a masterpiece on the stocks. If you put all that in, you'll do more than Raphael himself did. Let me know when your picture's finished, and wherever in the wide world I may be I'll post back to Florence and pay my respects to—the *Madonna of the future!*"

His face, at this, had a flush of consciousness, and he seemed to sigh half in protest, half in resignation. "I don't often mention my picture by name. I detest this modern custom of premature publicity. A great work needs silence, privacy, mystery. And then, do you know, people are so cruel, so frivolous, so unable to imagine a man's wishing to paint a Madonna at this time of day, that I've been laughed at, positively laughed at, sir!"—and his poor, guilty blush deepened. "I don't know what has prompted me to be so frank and trustful with you. You look as if you wouldn't laugh at me. My dear young man"—and he laid his hand on my arm—"I'm worthy of re-

spect. Whatever my limitations may be, I'm honest. There's nothing grotesque in a pure ambition or in a life devoted to it."

II

There was something so admirably candid in his look and tone that further questions seemed to savor just then of indiscretion. I had repeated opportunity to put as many as I would, however, for after this we spent much time together. Daily, for a fortnight, we met under agreement that he should help me to intimacy with the little treasure city. He knew it so well and had studied it with so pious a patience, he was so deeply versed both in its greater and its minor memories, he had become in short so fond and familiar a Florentine, that he was an ideal *valet de place* and I was glad enough to leave dryer documents at home and learn what I wanted from his lips and his example. He talked of Florence as a devoted old lover might still speak of an old incomparable mistress who remained proof against time; he liked to describe how he had lost his heart to her at first sight. "It's the fashion to make all cities of the feminine gender, but as a rule it's a monstrous mistake. Is Florence of the same sex as New York, as Chicago, as London, as Liverpool? She's the sole perfect lady of them all; one feels toward her as some sensitive, aspiring youth feels to some beautiful older woman with a 'history.' She fills you with a presumptuous gallantry." This disinterested passion seemed to stand my friend instead of the common social ties; he led a lonely life and cared for nothing but his work. I was duly flattered by his having taken my uninstructed years into his favor and by his generous sacrifice of precious hours to my society. We spent them in historic streets and consecrated nooks, in churches and convents and galleries, spent them above all in study of those early paintings in which Florence is so rich, returning ever and anon, with restless sympathies, to find in these tender blossoms of art a fragrance and savor more precious than the full-fruited knowledge of the later works. We lingered often in the mortuary chapel of San Lorenzo, where we watched Michelangelo's dim-visaged war-

rior sit like some awful Genius of Doubt and brood behind his eternal mask upon the mysteries of life. We stood more than once in the little convent chambers where Fra Angelico wrought as if an angel indeed had held his hand, and gathered that sense of scattered dews and early bird notes which makes an hour among his relics resemble a morning stroll in some monkish garden. We did all this and much more—wandered into obscure shrines, damp courts, and dusty palace rooms, in quest of lingering hints of fresco and lurking treasures of sculpture.

I was more and more impressed with my companion's remarkable singleness of purpose. Everything became a pretext for one of his high-flown excursions. Nothing could be seen or said that didn't lead him sooner or later to a glowing discourse on the true, the beautiful, and the good. If my friend was not a genius, he was certainly a natural rhapsodist, or even a harmless madman; and I found the play of his temper, his humor, and his candid and unworldly character as quaint as if he had been a creature from another planet. He seemed indeed to know very little of this one, and lived and moved altogether in his boundless province of art. A creature more unsullied by the accidents of life it's impossible to conceive, and I sometimes questioned the reality of an artistic virtue, an aesthetic purity, on which some profane experience hadn't rubbed off a little more. It was hard to have to accept him as of our own hard-headed stock; but after all there could be no better sign of his American star than the completeness of his reaction in favor of vague profits. The very heat of his worship was a mark of conversion; those born within sight of the temple take their opportunities more for granted. He had, moreover, all our native mistrust for intellectual discretion and our native relish for sonorous superlatives. As a critic he rather ignored proportion and degree; his recognitions had a generous publicity, his discriminations were all discoveries. The small change of appreciation seemed to him in fine no coin for a gentleman to handle; and yet with all this overflow of opinion and gesture he remained in himself a mystery. His professions were practically, somehow, all masks and screens, and his personal allusions, as to his ambiguous

background, mere wavings of the dim lantern. He was modest and proud, in other words, and never spoke of his domestic matters. He was evidently poor, and yet must have had some slender independence, since he could afford to make so merry over the fact that his culture of ideal beauty had never brought him a penny. His poverty, I supposed, was his motive for neither inviting me to his lodging nor mentioning its whereabouts. We met either in some public place or at my hotel, where I entertained him as freely as I might without appearing to be prompted by charity. He appeared for the most part hungry, and this was his nearest approach to human grossness. I made a point of never seeming to cross a certain line with him, but, each time we met, I ventured to make some respectful allusion to the *magnum opus*, to inquire, if I might, as to its health and progress. "We're getting on, with the Lord's help," he would say with a bravery that never languished; "I think we can't be said not to be doing well. You see I've the grand advantage that I lose no time. These hours I spend with you are pure profit. They bring me in a harvest of incentives. Just as the truly religious soul is always at worship, the genuine artist is always in labor. He takes his property wherever he finds it—he learns some precious secret from every object that stands up in the light. If you but knew—in connection with something to be done—of the rapture of observing and remembering, of applying one's notes. I take in at every glance some hint for light, for color, for style. When I get home I pour out my treasures into the lap of my Madonna. Oh, I'm not idle! *Nulla dies sine linea.*"

III

I had been introduced meanwhile to an American lady whose drawing room had long formed an attractive place of reunion for strangers of supposed distinction. She lived on a fourth floor and was not rich; but she offered her visitors very good tea, little cakes at option, and conversation not quite to match. Her conversation had mainly a high aesthetic pitch, for Mrs. Coventry was famously "artistic." Her apartment was a sort of

miniature Pitti Palace. She possessed "early masters" by the dozen—a cluster of Peruginos in her dining room, a Giotto in her boudoir, an Andrea del Sarto over her drawing-room chimney piece. Surrounded by these treasures and by innumerable bronzes, mosaics, majolica dishes, and little worm-eaten diptychs covered with angular saints on gilded backgrounds, she enjoyed the dignity of a social high priestess of the arts. She always wore on her bosom a huge, if reduced, copy of the "Madonna della Seggiola." Gaining her ear quietly one evening I asked her whether she knew among our compatriots in the place a certain eccentric but charming Mr. Theobald.

"Know him, know poor Theobald?"—her answer was as public as if I had owed it to the bell crier. "All Florence knows him, his flame-colored locks, his black velvet coat, his interminable harangues on the Beautiful and his wondrous Madonna that mortal eye has never seen and that mortal patience has quite given up expecting."

"Really," I asked, "you don't believe in his wondrous Madonna?"

"My dear ingenuous youth," rejoined my shrewd friend, "has he made a convert of you? Well, we all believed in him once; he came down upon Florence—that is, on our little colony here—and took the town by storm. Another Raphael, at the very least, had been born among men, and our poor, dear, barbarous country was to have the credit of him. Hadn't he the very hair of Raphael flowing down on his shoulders? The hair, alas—it's his difficulty—appears to have to do duty for the head! We swallowed him whole, however; we hung on his lips and proclaimed his genius from the house tops. The women were dying to sit to him for their portraits and be made immortal like Leonardo's Gioconda. We decided that his manner was a good deal like Leonardo's—'esoteric' and indescribable and fascinating. Well, it has all remained esoteric, and nobody can describe what nobody has ever seen. The months, the years have passed and the miracle has hung fire; our master has never produced his masterpiece. He has passed hours in the galleries and churches, posturing, musing, and gazing; he has talked more

about his subject—about every subject—than any human being before has ever talked about anything, but has never put brush to canvas. We had all subscribed, as it were, to the great performance; but as it never came off people began to ask for their money again. I was one of the last of the faithful; I carried devotion so far as to sit to him for my head. If you could have seen the horrible creature he made of me, you'd recognize that even a woman with no more vanity than will tie her bonnet straight must have cooled off then. The man didn't know the very alphabet of drawing. His strong point, he intimated, was his sentiment; but is it a consolation, when one has been painted a fright, to know that the man has particularly enjoyed doing it? One by one, I confess, we fell away from the faith, and Mr. Theobald didn't lift his little finger to preserve us. At the first hint that we were tired of waiting and that we should like the show to begin he was off in a huff. 'Great work requires time, contemplation, privacy, mystery! O ye of little faith!' We answered that we didn't insist on a great work; that the five-act tragedy might come at his convenience; that we merely asked for something to keep us from yawning, some light little *lever de rideau*. On that the poor, dear man took his stand as a genius misconceived and persecuted, a martyr to his opinions, and washed his hands of us from that hour! No, I believe he does me the honor to consider me the head and front of the conspiracy formed to nip his glory in the bud—a bud that has taken twenty years to blossom. Ask him if he knows me, and he'll tell you I'm a horribly ugly old woman who has vowed his destruction because he doesn't see his way to paint her in the style of Titian's Flora. I'm afraid that since then he has had none but chance followers, innocent strangers like yourself, who have taken him at his word. The mountain's still in labor; I haven't heard that the mouse has been born. I pass him once in a while in the galleries, and he fixes his great dark eyes on me with a sublimity of indifference, as if I were a bad copy of a Sassoferrato! It's ever so long now since I heard that he was making studies for a Madonna who was to be a résumé of all the other Madonnas of the Italian school—like that antique

Venus who borrowed a nose from one great image and an ankle from another. It's certainly a grand idea. The parts may be fine, but when I think of my unhappy portrait I tremble for the whole. He has communicated this *trouvaille*, under pledge of solemn secrecy, to fifty chosen spirits, to everyone he has ever been able to buttonhole for five minutes. I suppose he wants to get an order for it, and he's not to blame; for goodness knows how he lives. I see by your blush"—my friend freely proceeded—"that you've been honored with his confidence. You needn't be ashamed, my dear young man; a man of your age is none the worse for a certain generous credulity. Only allow me this word of advice: keep your credulity out of your pockets! Don't pay for the picture till it's delivered. You haven't been treated to a peep at it, I imagine? No more have your fifty predecessors in the faith. There are people who doubt there's any picture to be seen. I shouldn't myself be surprised if, when one runs him to earth, one finds scarce more than in that terrible little tale of Balzac's—a mere mass of incoherent scratches and daubs, a jumble of dead paint!"

I listened to this bold sketch in silent wonder. It had a painfully plausible sound, it set the seal on shy suspicions of my own. My hostess was satirical, but was neither unveracious nor vindictive. I determined to let my judgment wait upon events. Possibly she was right, but if she was wrong she was cruelly wrong. Her version of my friend's eccentricities made me impatient to see him again and examine him in the light of public opinion. On our next meeting I at once asked him if he knew Mrs. Coventry. He laid his hand on my arm with a sadder, though perhaps sharper, look than had ever yet come into his face. "Has she got *you* into training? She's a most vain woman. She's empty and scheming, and she pretends to be serious and kind. She prattles about Giotto's second manner and Vittoria Colonna's liaison with 'Michael'—one would suppose Michael lived across the way and was expected in to take a hand at whist—but she knows as little about art, and about the conditions of production, as I know about the stock market. She profanes sacred things," he more vehemently went on.

"She cares for you only as someone to hand teacups in that horrible humbugging little parlor with its trumpery Peruginos! If you can't dash off a new picture every three days and let her hand it round among her guests, she tells them you're a low fraud and that they must have nothing to do with you."

This attempt of mine to test Mrs. Coventry's understanding of our poor friend was made in the course of a late afternoon walk to the quiet old church of San Miniato, on one of the hill-tops which directly overlook the city, from whose gates you are guided to it by a stony and cypress-bordered walk, the most fitting of avenues to a shrine. No spot is more propitious to rest and thought than the broad terrace in front of the church, where, lounging against the parapet, you may glance in slow alternation from the black and yellow marbles of the church façade, seamed and cracked with time and wind-sown with a tender flora of their own, down to the full domes and slender towers of Florence and over to the blue sweep of the wide-mouthed cup of mountains in whose hollow this choicest handful of the spoils of time has been stored away for keeping. I had proposed, as a diversion from the painful memories evoked by Mrs. Coventry's name, that Theobald should go with me the next evening to the opera, where some work rarely played was to be given. He declined, as I half expected, for I had noted that he regularly kept his evenings in reserve and never alluded to his manner of passing them. "You've reminded me before," I put to him, "of that charming speech of the Florentine painter in Alfred de Musset's *Lorenzaccio*: '*I do no harm to anyone. I pass my days in my studio. On Sunday I go to the Annunziata or to Santa Maria; the monks think I have a voice; they dress me in a white gown and a red cap, and I take a share in the choruses; sometimes I do a little solo: these are the only times I go into public. In the evening, I visit my sweetheart; when the night is fine, we pass it on her balcony.*' I don't know whether you've a sweetheart or whether she has a balcony. But if you are so happy it's certainly better than trying to hold out against a third-rate prima donna."

He made no immediate answer, but at last he turned to me

solemnly. "Can you look upon a beautiful woman with reverent eyes?"

"Really," I said, "I don't pretend to be sheepish, but I should be sorry to think myself impudent." And I asked him what in the world he meant. When at last I had assured him that if the question was of his giving me such an exhibition I would accept it on the terms he should impose, he made known to me—with an air of religious mystery—that it was in his power to introduce me to the most beautiful woman in Italy: "A beauty with a beautiful soul."

"Upon my word," I said, "you're extremely fortunate. I'm not less so, but you do keep cards up your sleeve."

"This woman's beauty," he returned, "is a revelation, a lesson, a morality, a poem! It's my daily study." Of course after this I lost no time in reminding him of what, before we parted, had taken the shape of a promise. "I feel somehow," he had said, "as if it were a violation of that privacy in which I've always studied and admired her. Therefore what I'm doing for you—well, my friend, is friendship. No hint of her existence has ever fallen from my lips. But with too great a familiarity we're apt to lose a sense of the real value of things, and you'll perhaps throw some new light on what I show you and offer a fresher appreciation."

We went accordingly by appointment to a certain ancient house in the heart of Florence—the precinct of the Mercato Vecchio—and climbed a dark, steep staircase to its highest flight. Theobald's worshiped human type seemed hung as far above the line of common vision as his artistic ideal was lifted over the usual practice of men. He passed without knocking into the dark vestibule of a small apartment where, opening an inner door, he ushered me into a small saloon. The room affected me as mean and somber, though I caught a glimpse of white curtains swaying gently at an open window. At a table, near a lamp, sat a woman dressed in black, working at a piece of embroidery. As my guide entered she looked up with a serene smile; then, seeing me, she made a movement of surprise and rose with stately grace. He stepped nearer, taking her hand and

kissing it with an indescribable air of immemorial usage. As he bent his head she looked at me askance and had, I thought, a perfectly human change of color.

"This is the sublime Serafina!"—Theobald frankly waved me forward. "And this is a friend and a lover of the arts," he added, introducing me. I received a smile, a curtsy, and a request to be seated.

The most beautiful woman in Italy was a person of a generous Italian type and of a great simplicity of demeanor. Seated again at her lamp with her embroidery, she seemed to have nothing whatever to say. Theobald, bending to her in a sort of Platonic ecstasy, asked her a dozen paternally tender questions about her health, her state of mind, her occupations and the progress of her needlework, which he examined minutely and summoned me to admire. It was one of the pieces of some ecclesiastical vestment—ivory satin wrought with an elaborate design of silver and gold. She made answer in a full rich voice, but with a brevity I couldn't know whether to attribute to native reserve or to the profane constraint of my presence. She had been that morning to confession; she had also been to market and had bought a chicken for dinner. She felt very happy; she had nothing to complain of except that the people for whom she was making her vestment and who furnished her materials should be willing to put such rotten silver thread into the garment, as one might say, of the Lord. From time to time, as she took her slow stitches, she raised her eyes and covered me with a glance which seemed at first to express but a placid curiosity, but in which, as I saw it repeated, I thought I perceived the dim glimmer of an attempt to establish an understanding with me at the expense of our companion. Meanwhile, as mindful as possible of Theobald's injunction of reverence, I considered the lady's personal claims to the fine compliment he had paid her.

That she was indeed a beautiful woman I recognized as soon as I had recovered from the surprise of finding her without the freshness of youth. Her appearance was of the sort which, in losing youth, loses little of its greater merit, expressed for the most part as it was in form and structure and, as Theobald

would have said, in "composition." She was broad and ample, low-browed and large-eyed, dark and pale. Her thick brown hair hung low beside her cheek and ear and seemed to drape her head with a covering as chaste and formal as the veil of a nun. The poise and carriage of this head were admirably free and noble, and all the more effective that their freedom was at moments discreetly corrected by a little sanctimonious droop which harmonized admirably with the level gaze of her dark and quiet eye. A strong, serene, physical nature, with the placid temper which comes of no nerves and no troubles, seemed this lady's comfortable portion. She was dressed in plain, dull black, save for a dark-blue kerchief which was folded across her bosom and exposed a glimpse of her massive throat. Over this kerchief was suspended a little silver cross. I admired her greatly, yet with a considerable reserve. A certain mild intellectual apathy was the very mark of her complexion and form, and always seemed to round and enrich them; but this bourgeoisie Egeria, if I viewed her right, betrayed rather a vulgar stagnation of mind. There might have once been a dim spiritual light in her face, but it had long since begun to wane. And furthermore, in plain prose, she was growing stout. My disappointment amounted very nearly to complete disenchantment when Theobald, as if to facilitate my covert inspection, declaring that the lamp was very dim and that she would ruin her eyes without more light, rose and addressed himself to a couple of candles on the mantelpiece, which he lighted and transferred to the table. In this improved clearness I made our hostess out a very mature person. She was neither haggard nor worn nor gray, but she was thick and coarse. The beautiful soul my friend had promised me seemed scarce worth making such a point of; it dwelt in no deeper principle than some accident of quietude, some matronly mildness of lip and brow. I should have been ready even to pronounce her sanctified bend of the head nothing more inward than the trick of a person always working at embroidery. It might have been even a slightly more sinister symptom, for in spite of her apparently admirable dullness this object of our all-candid homage practically dropped a hint that

she took the situation rather less seriously than her friend. When he rose to light the candles, she looked across at me with a quick intelligent smile and tapped her forehead with her forefinger; then, as from a sudden feeling of compassionate loyalty to poor Theobald I preserved a blank face, she gave a little shrug and resumed her work.

What was the relation of this singular couple? Was he the most ardent of friends or the most discreet of lovers? Did she regard him as an eccentric swain whose benevolent admiration of her beauty she was not ill pleased to humor at the small cost of having him climb into her little parlor and gossip of summer nights? With her decent and somber dress, her simple gravity, and that fine piece of priestly stitching, she looked like some pious lay member of a sisterhood living by special permission outside her convent walls. Or was she maintained here aloft by her admirer in comfortable leisure, so that he might have before him the perfect eternal type, uncorrupted and untarnished by the struggle for existence? Her shapely hands, I observed, were very fair and white; they lacked the traces of what is called honest toil.

"And the pictures, how do they come on?" she asked of Theobald after a long pause.

"Oh, in their own fine, quiet way! I've here a friend whose sympathy and encouragement give me new faith and ardor."

Our hostess turned to me, gazed at me a moment rather inscrutably, and then, repeating the vivid reference to the contents of our poor friend's head she had used a minute before, "He has a magnificent genius!" she said with perfect gravity.

"I'm inclined to think so"—I was amused in spite of myself.

"Eh, why do you smile?" she cried. "If you doubt what I say, you must see the *santo bambino!*" And she took the lamp and conducted me to the other side of the room, where, on the wall, in a plain black frame, hung a large drawing in red chalk. Beneath it was attached a little bowl for holy water. The drawing represented a very young child, entirely naked, half-nestling back against his mother's gown, but with his two little arms outstretched as in the act of benediction. It had been

thrown off with singular freedom and directness, but was none the less vivid with the sacred bloom of infancy. A dimpled elegance and grace, which yet didn't weaken its expression, recalled the touch of Correggio. "That's what he can do!" said my hostess. "It's the blessed little boy I lost. It's his very image, and the Signor Teobaldo, a generous person if there ever was one, gave it me as a gift. He has given me many things besides!"

I looked at the picture for some time—certainly it had a charm. Turning back to our friend I assured him that if it were hung amid the drawings in the Uffizi and labeled with a glorious name it would bravely hold its own. My praise seemed to give him joy; he pressed my hands—his eyes filled with tears. I had apparently quickened his desire to expatiate on the history of the drawing, for he rose and took leave of our companion, kissing her hand with the same mild ardor as before. It occurred to me that the offer of a similar piece of gallantry on my own part might help me to know what manner of woman she was. When she felt my intention she withdrew her hand, dropped her eyes solemnly, and made me a severe curtsy. Theobald took my arm and led me rapidly into the street.

"And what do you think of the sublime Serafina?" he cried with anxiety.

"She's certainly a fine figure of a woman," I answered without ceremony.

He eyed me an instant askance and then seemed hurried along by the current of remembrance. "You should have seen the mother and the child together, seen them as I first saw them—the mother with her head draped in a shawl, a divine trouble in her face, and the bambino pressed to her bosom. You'd have said, I'm sure, that Raphael had found his match in common chance. I was coming back one summer night from a long walk in the country when I met this apparition at the city gate. The woman held out her hand and I hardly knew whether to say 'What do you want?' or to fall down and worship. She asked for a little money and received what I gave her with the holy sweetness with which the Santissima Vergine receives the

offerings of the faithful. I saw she was beautiful and pale—she might have stepped out of the stable of Bethlehem! I gave her money and helped her on her way into the town. I had guessed her story. She too was a maiden mother, but she had been turned out into the world in her shame. I felt in all my pulses that here was my subject marvelously realized. It was as if I had had like one of the monkish artists of old a miraculous vision. I rescued the poor creatures, cherished them, watched them as I would have done some precious work of art, some lovely fragment of fresco discovered in a moldering cloister. In a month—as if to deepen and sanctify the sadness and sweetness of it all—the poor little child died. When she felt he was going, she lifted him up to me for ten minutes—so as not to lose him *all*—and I made that sketch. You saw a feverish haste in it, I suppose; I wanted to spare the poor little mortal the pain of his position. After that I doubly valued the mother. She's the simplest, sweetest, most natural creature that ever bloomed in this brave old land of Italy. She lives in the memory of her child, in her gratitude for the scanty kindness I've been able to show her, and in her simple, instinctive, imperturbable piety. She's not even conscious of her beauty; my admiration has never made her vain. Heaven yet knows that I've made no secret what I think of it. You must have taken in the extraordinary clearness and modesty of her look. Was there ever such a truly virginal brow, such a natural classic elegance in the wave of the hair and the arch of the forehead? I've studied her; I may say I know her. I've absorbed her little by little, I've made her my own, my mind's stamped and imbued, and I've determined now to clinch the impression. I shall at last invite her to sit for me!"

"‘At last—at last?’" I repeated in amazement. "Do you mean she has never done so yet?"

"I've not really—since that first *time*—made her *pose*," he said with a shade of awkwardness. "I've taken notes, you know; I've got my grand fundamental impression. That's the great thing! But I've not actually put her to the inconvenience—so to call it—to which I'd have put a common model."

What had become for the moment of my perception and my tact I'm at a loss to say; in their absence I was unable to repress a headlong exclamation. I was destined to regret it. We had stopped at a turning and beneath a lamp. "My poor friend," I exclaimed, laying my hand on his shoulder, "you've *dawdled!* She's an old, old woman—for a maiden mother."

It was as if I had brutally struck him; I shall never forget the long slow almost ghastly look of pain with which he answered me. "Dawdled?—old, old?" he stammered. "Are you joking?"

"Why, my dear fellow, I suppose you don't take her for anything *but* mature?"

He drew a long breath and leaned against a house, looked at me with questioning, protesting, reproachful eyes. At last starting forward and grasping my arm: "Answer me solemnly: does she seem to you really and truly old? Is she wrinkled, is she faded—am I blind?" he demanded.

Then at last I understood the immensity of his illusion; how, one by one, the noiseless years had ebbed away and left him brooding in charmed inaction, forever preparing for a work forever deferred. It struck me almost as a kindness now to tell him the plain truth. "I should be sorry to say you're blind," I returned, "but I think you're rather unfortunately deceived. You've lost time in effortless contemplation. Your friend was once young and fresh and virginal; but you see that must have been some years ago. Still, she has fine things left. By all means make her sit for you." But I broke down; his face was too horribly reproachful.

He took off his hat and stood passing his handkerchief mechanically over his forehead. "'Fine things left?'" he stared. "Do you speak as if other people had helped themselves—?"

"Why, my dear man," I smiled, "the years have helped themselves! But she has what the French call—don't they?—*de beaux restes?*"

Oh, how he gaped and how something seemed to roll over him! "I must make my Madonna out of *de beaux restes!* What a masterpiece she'll be! Old—old! Old—old!" he re-echoed.

"Never mind her age," I cried, revolted by what I had done; "never mind my impression of her! You have your memory, your notes, your genius. Finish your picture in a month. I pronounce it beforehand a masterpiece and hereby offer you for it any sum you may choose to ask."

He kept staring, but seemed scarce to understand me. "Old—old!" he kept stupidly repeating. "If she's old what am I? If her beauty has faded where, where is my strength? Has life been a dream? Have I worshiped too long? Have I loved too well?" The charm in truth was broken. That the chord of illusion should have snapped at my light accidental touch showed how it had been weakened by excessive tension. The poor fellow's sense of wasted time, of vanished opportunity, surged in upon his soul in waves of darkness. He suddenly dropped his head and burst into tears.

I led him homeward with all possible tenderness, but I attempted neither to check his grief, to restore his equanimity, nor to unsay the hard truth. When we reached my hotel I tried to induce him to come in. "We'll drink a glass of wine," I smiled, "to the completion of the Madonna."

With a violent effort he held up his head, mused for a moment with a formidably somber frown and then, giving me his hand, "I'll finish it," he vowed, "in a month! No, no, in a fortnight! After all I have it *here!*" And he smote his forehead. "Of course she's old! She can afford to have it said of her—a woman who has made twenty years pass like a twelvemonth! Old—old! Why, sir, she shall be eternal!"

I wished to see him safely to his own door, but he waved me back and walked away with an air of resolution, whistling and swinging his cane. I waited a moment—then followed him at a distance and saw him proceed to cross the Santa Trinità Bridge. When he reached the middle he suddenly paused, as if his strength had deserted him, and leaned upon the parapet gazing over into the Arno. I was careful to keep him in sight; I confess I passed ten very nervous minutes. He recovered himself at last and went his way slowly and with hanging head.

That I had really startled him into a bolder use of his long-

garnered stores of knowledge and taste, into the vulgar effort and hazard of production, seemed at first reason enough for his continued silence and absence; but as day followed day without his either calling or sending me a line and without my meeting him in his customary haunts, in the galleries, in the chapel at San Lorenzo, or even strolling between the Arno-side and the great hedge screen of verdure which, along the drive of the Cascine, throws the fair occupants of the open carriages into such becoming relief—as for more than a week I got neither tidings nor sight of him, I began to fear I might have fatally offended him and that instead of giving a wholesome push to his talent, or at least to his faith, I had done it a real harm. I had a wretched suspicion I might have made him ill. My stay at Florence was drawing to a close, and it was important that before resuming my journey I should assure myself of the truth. Theobald had to the last kept his lodging a secret, and I was at a loss how to follow him up. The simplest course was to make inquiry of the object of his homage who neighbored with the Mercato Vecchio, and I confess that unsatisfied curiosity as to the lady herself counseled it as well. Perhaps I had done her injustice, perhaps she was as immortally fresh and fair as he conceived her. I was at any rate anxious to set eyes once more on the ripe enchantress who had made twenty years, as he had said, pass like a twelvemonth. I repaired accordingly one morning to her abode, climbed the interminable staircase, and reached her door. It stood ajar, and, while I hesitated to enter, a little serving maid came clattering out with an empty cooking pot, as if she had just performed some savory errand. The inner door too was open; so I crossed the little vestibule and reached the room in which I had formerly been received. It hadn't its evening aspect. The table, or one end of it, was spread for a late breakfast, before which sat a gentleman—an individual at least of the male sex—doing execution upon a beefsteak and onions and a bottle of wine. At his elbow, in intimate nearness, was placed the lady of the house. Her attitude, as I arrived, was not that of an enchantress. With one hand she held in her lap a plate of smoking macaroni; with the other she had lifted

high in air one of the pendulous filaments of this succulent compound and was in the act of slipping it gently down her throat. On the uncovered end of the table, facing her companion, were ranged half-a-dozen small statuettes, of some snuff-colored substance resembling terra cotta. He, brandishing his knife with ardor, was apparently descanting on their merits.

Evidently I darkened the door. My hostess dropped her macaroni—into her mouth, and rose hastily with a harsh exclamation and a flushed face. I forthwith felt sure that the sublime Serafina's secret was still better worth knowing than I had supposed, and that the way to learn it was to take it for granted. I summoned my best Italian, I smiled and bowed and apologized for my intrusion; and in a moment, whether or no I had dispelled the lady's irritation, I had at least made her prudent. I must put myself at my ease; I must take a seat. This was another friend of hers—also an artist, she declared with a smile that had turned to the gracious. Her companion wiped his mustache and bowed with great civility. I saw at a glance that he was equal to the situation. He was presumably the author of the statuettes on the table and knew a money-spending *forestière* when he saw one. He was a small active man, with a clever, impudent tossed-up nose, a sharp, little black eye, conscious of many things at once, and the cocked-up mustache of a trooper. On the side of his head he wore jauntily one of the loose velvet caps affected by sculptors in damp studios, and I observed that his feet were encased in bright "worked" slippers. On Serafina's remarking with dignity that I was the friend of Mr. Theobald he broke out into that fantastic French of which Italians are sometimes so insistently lavish, declaring without reserve that Mr. Theobald was a magnificent genius.

"I am sure I don't know," I answered with a shrug. "If you're in a position to affirm it you've the advantage of me. I've seen nothing from his hand but the bambino yonder, which certainly is fine."

He had it that the bambino was a masterpiece—in the *maniera Correggiesca*. It was only a pity, he added with a knowing laugh, that the sketch hadn't been made on some good bit of

honeycombed old panel. The sublime Serafina hereupon protested that Mr. Theobald was the soul of honor and didn't lend himself to that style of manufacture. "I'm not a judge of genius," she said, "and I know nothing of pictures. I'm a poor, simple widow; but I'm sure *nostro signore* has the heart of an angel and the virtue of a saint. He's my great benefactor," she made no secret of it. The afterglow of the somewhat sinister flush with which she had greeted me still lingered in her cheek and perhaps didn't favor her beauty; I couldn't but judge it a wise custom of Theobald's to visit her only by candlelight. She was coarse and her poor adorer a poet.

"I've the greatest esteem for him," I stated; "it's for that reason I've been so uneasy at not seeing him for ten days. Have you seen him? Is he perhaps ill?"

"Ill? Heaven forbid!" cried Serafina with genuine vehemence.

Her companion uttered a rapid expletive and reproached her with not having been to see him. She hesitated a moment, then simpered the least bit and bridled. "He comes to see me—without reproach! But it wouldn't be the same for me to go to him, though indeed you may almost call him a man of holy life."

"He has the greatest admiration for you," I said. "He'd have been honored by your visit."

She looked at me a moment sharply. "More admiration than you. Admit that!" Of course I protested with all the eloquence at my command, and my ambiguous hostess then confessed that she had taken no fancy to me on my former visit and that, our friend not having returned, she believed I had poisoned his mind against her. "It would be no kindness to the poor gentleman, I can tell you that," she said. "He has come to see me every evening for years. It's a long friendship! No one knows him as I do."

"I don't pretend to know him or to understand him. I can only esteem and—I think I may say—love him. Nevertheless he seems to me a little ——!" And I touched my forehead and waved my hand in the air.

Serafina glanced at her companion as for inspiration. He contented himself with shrugging his shoulders while he filled

his glass again. The *padrona* hereupon treated me to a look of more meaning than quite consorted with her noble blankness. "Ah, but it's for that that *I* love him! The world has so little kindness for such persons. It laughs at them and despises them and cheats them. He's too good for this wicked life. It's his blest imagination that he finds a little Paradise up here in my poor apartment. If he thinks so, how can I help it? He has a strange belief—really I ought to be ashamed to tell you—that I resemble the Madonna Santissima, heaven forgive me! I let him think what he pleases so long as it makes him happy. He was very kind to me once and I'm not one who forgets a favor. So I receive him every evening civilly, and ask after his health, and let him look at me on this side and that. For that matter, I may say it without vanity, I was worth looking at once. And he's not always amusing, *poveretto!* He sits sometimes for an hour without speaking a word, or else he talks away, without stopping, about art and nature and beauty and duty, about fifty fine things that are all so much Latin to me. I beg you to understand that he has never said a word to me I mightn't honorably listen to. He may be a little cracked, but he's one of the blessed saints."

"Eh, eh," cried the man, "the blessed saints were all a little cracked!"

Serafina, I surmised, left part of her story untold; what she said sufficed to make poor Theobald's own statement still more affecting than I had already found its strained simplicity. "It's a strange fortune, certainly," she went on, "to have such a friend as this dear man—a friend who's less than a lover, yet more than a brother." I glanced at her comrade, who continued to smirk in a mystifying manner while he twisted the ends of his mustache between his copious mouthfuls. Was *he* less than a lover? "But what will you have?" Serafina pursued. "In this hard world one mustn't ask too many questions; one must take what comes and keep what one gets. I've kept my *amorouso* for twenty years, and I do hope that, at this time of day, signore, you've not come to turn him against me!"

I assured her I had no such intention, and that I should vastly

regret disturbing Mr. Theobald's habits or convictions. On the contrary I was alarmed about him and would at once go in search of him. She gave me his address and a florid account of her sufferings at his nonappearance. She had not been to him for various reasons; chiefly because she was afraid of displeasing him, as he had always made such a mystery of his home. "You might have sent this gentleman!" I however ventured to suggest.

"Ah," cried the gentleman, "he admires Madonna Serafina, but he wouldn't admire me whom he doesn't take for Saint Joseph!" And then confidentially, his finger on his nose: "His taste's terribly severe!"

I was about to withdraw after having promised that I would inform our hostess of my friend's condition, when her companion, who had risen from table and girded his loins apparently for the onset, grasped me gently by the arm and led me before the row of statuettes. "I perceive by your conversation, signore, that you're a patron of the arts. Allow me to request your honorable attention for these modest products of my own ingenuity. They are brand-new, fresh from my atelier, and have never been exhibited in public. I have brought them here to receive the verdict of this dear lady, who's a good critic, for all she may pretend to the contrary. I'm the inventor of this peculiar style of statuette—of subject, manner, material, everything. Touch them, I pray you; handle them freely—you needn't fear. Delicate as they look, it's impossible they should break! My various creations have met with great success. They're especially admired by the American *conoscenti*. I've sent them all over Europe—to London, Paris, Vienna! You may have noticed some little specimens in Paris, on the *grand boulevard*"—he aimed at the French sound of the words—"in a shop of which they constitute the specialty. There's always a crowd about the window. They form a very pleasing ornament for the mantel shelf of a gay young bachelor, for the boudoir of a pretty woman. You couldn't make a prettier present to a person with whom you should wish to exchange a harmless joke. It's not classic art, signore, of course; but, between ourselves, isn't classic art sometimes rather a bore? Caricature, burlesque,

la charge, has hitherto been confined to paper, to the pen and pencil. Now it has been my inspiration to introduce it into statuary. For this purpose I've invented a peculiar plastic compound which you will permit me not to divulge. That's my secret, signore! It's as light, you perceive, as cork, and yet firm as alabaster! I frankly confess that I really pride myself as much on this little stroke of chemical ingenuity as upon the other element of novelty in my creations—my types. What do you say to my types, signore? The idea's bold; does it strike you as happy? Cats and monkeys—monkeys and cats—all human life is there! Human life, of course I mean, viewed with the eye of the satirist! To combine sculpture and satire, signore, has been my unprecedented ambition. I flatter myself I've not egregiously failed."

As this jaunty Juvenal of the chimney piece thus persuasively proceeded, he took up his little groups successively from the table, held them aloft, turned them about, rapped them with his knuckles and gazed at them lovingly, his head on one side. They consisted each, with a vengeance, of a cat and a monkey, occasionally draped, in some preposterously sentimental conjunction. They exhibited a certain sameness of motive and illustrated chiefly the different phases of what, in fine terms, might have been called the amorous advance and the amorous alarm; but they were strikingly clever and expressive, and were at once very dreadful little beasts and very natural men and women. I confess, however, that they failed to amuse me. I was doubtless not in a mood to enjoy them, for they seemed to me peculiarly cynical and vulgar. Their imitative felicity was revolting. As I looked askance at the complacent little artist, brandishing them between finger and thumb and caressing them with the fondest eye, he struck me as himself little more than an exceptionally intelligent ape. I mustered an admiring grin, however, and he blew another blast. "My figures are studied from life! I've a little menagerie of monkeys whose frolics I follow by the hour. As for the cats, one has only to look out of one's back window! Since I've begun to examine these expressive little brutes I've made many

profound observations. Speaking, signore, to a man of imagination, I may say that my little designs are not without a philosophy of their own. Truly, I don't know whether the cats and monkeys imitate us, or whether it's we who imitate them." I congratulated him on his philosophy, and he resumed: "You'll do me the honor to admit that I've handled my subjects with delicacy. Eh, it was needed, *signore mio*. I've been just a bit free, but not too free—eh, *dica?* Just a scrap of a hint, you know! You may see as much or as little as you please. These little groups, however, are no measure of my invention. If you'll favor me with a call at my studio, I think you'll admit that my combinations are really infinite. I likewise execute figures to command. You've perhaps some little motive—the fruit of your philosophy of life, signore—which you'd like to have interpreted. I can promise to work it up to your satisfaction; it shall have as many high lights and sharp accents as you please! Allow me to present you with my card and to remind you that my prices are moderate. Only sixty francs for a little group like that. My statuettes are as durable as bronze—*aere perennius*, signore—and, between ourselves, I think they're more amusing!"

As I pocketed his card I turned an eye on Madonna Serafina, wondering whether she had a sense for contrasts. She had picked up one of the little couples and was tenderly dusting it with a feather broom.

What I had just seen and heard had so deepened my compassionate interest in my deluded friend that I took a summary leave, making my way directly to the house designated by this remarkable woman. It was in an obscure corner of the opposite side of the town and presented a somber and squalid appearance. A withered crone, in the doorway, on my inquiring for Theobald, welcomed me with a mumbled blessing and an expression of relief at the poor gentleman's having at last a caller. His lodging appeared to consist of a single room at the top of the house. On getting no answer to my knock I opened the door, supposing him absent; so that it gave me a certain shock to find him but seated helpless and dumb. His chair was near the

single window, facing an easel which supported a large canvas. On my entering he looked up at me blankly, without changing his position, which was that of absolute lassitude and dejection, his arms loosely folded, his legs stretched before him, his head hanging on his breast. Advancing into the room I saw how vividly his face answered to his attitude. He was pale, haggard, and unshaven, and his dull and sunken eye gazed at me without a spark of recognition. My fear had been that he would greet me with fierce reproaches, as the cruelly officious patron who had turned his contentment to bitterness, and I was relieved to find my appearance excite no visible resentment. "Don't you know me?"—I put out my hand. "Have you already forgotten me?"

He made no response, but kept his position stupidly, and left me staring about the room. It spoke, the poor place, all plaintively for itself. Shabby, sordid, naked, it contained, beyond the wretched bed, but the scantiest provision for personal comfort. It was bedroom at once and studio—a grim ghost of a studio. A few dusty casts and prints on the walls, three or four old canvases turned face inward and a rusty-looking color box formed, with the easel at the window, the sum of its appurtenances. The whole scene savored horribly of indigence. Its only wealth was the picture on the easel, presumably the famous Madonna. Averted as this was from the door, I was unable to see its face; but at last, sickened by my impression of vacant misery, I passed behind Theobald eagerly and tenderly. I can scarcely say I was surprised at what I found—a canvas that was a mere dead blank cracked and discolored by time. This was his immortal work! Though not surprised, I confess I was powerfully moved, and I think that for five minutes I couldn't have trusted myself to speak. At last my silent nearness affected him; he stirred and turned and then rose, looking at me with a slow return of intelligence. I murmured some kind ineffective nothings about his being ill and needing advice and care, but he seemed absorbed in the effort to recall distinctly what had last passed between us. "You were right," he said with a pitiful smile, "I'm a dawdler! I'm a failure! I shall do

nothing more in this world. You opened my eyes, and though the truth is bitter I bear you no grudge. Amen! I've been sitting here for a week face to face with it, the terrible truth, face to face with the past, with my weakness and poverty and nullity. I shall never touch a brush! I believe I've neither eaten nor slept. Look at that canvas!" he went on as I relieved my emotion by an urgent request that he would come home with me and dine. "That was to have contained my masterpiece! Isn't it a promising foundation? The elements of it are all *here*." And he tapped his forehead with that mystic confidence which had so often marked the gesture for me before. "If I could only transpose them into some brain that has the hand, the will! Since I've been sitting here taking stock of my intellects, I've come to believe that I've the material for a hundred masterpieces. But my hand's paralyzed now and they'll never be painted. I never began! I waited and waited to be worthier to begin—I wasted my life in preparation. While I fancied my creation was growing it was only dying. I've taken the whole business too hard. Michelangelo didn't when he went at the Lorenzo. He did his best at a venture, and his venture's immortal. *That's* mine!" And he pointed with a gesture I shall never forget at the empty canvas. "I suppose we're a genus by ourselves in the providential scheme—we talents that can't act, that can't do nor dare! We take it out in talk, in study, in plans and promises, in visions! But our visions, let me tell you," he cried with a toss of his head, "have a way of being brilliant, and a man has not lived in vain who has seen the things *I've* seen! Of course you won't believe in them when that bit of worm-eaten cloth is all I have to show for them; but to convince you, to enchant and astound the world, I need only the hand of Raphael. His brain I already have. A pity, you'll say, that I haven't his modesty! Ah, let me boast and babble now—it's all I have left! I'm the half of a genius! Where in the wide world is my other half? Lodged perhaps in the vulgar soul, the cunning ready fingers of some dull copyist or some trivial artisan who turns out by the dozen his easy prodigies of touch! But it's not for me to sneer at him; he at least does something.

He's not a dawdler. Well for me if I had been vulgar and clever and reckless, if I could have shut my eyes and taken my leap."

What to say to the poor fellow, what to do for him, seemed hard to determine; I chiefly felt I must break the spell of his present inaction and draw him out of the haunted air of the little room it was such cruel irony to call a studio. I can't say I persuaded him to come forth with me; he simply suffered himself to be led, and when we began to walk in the warm light of day I was able to appreciate his great weakness. Nevertheless he seemed in a manner to revive; he even murmured to me at last that he should like to go to the Pitti Gallery. I shall never forget our melancholy stroll through those gorgeous halls, every picture on whose walls glowed, to my stricken sight, with an insolent renewal of strength and luster. The eyes and lips of the great portraits reflected for me a pitying scorn of the dejected pretender who had dreamed of competing with their triumphant authors. The celestial candor even of the "Madonna of the Chair," as we paused in perfect silence before her, broke into the strange smile of the women of Leonardo. Perfect silence indeed marked our whole progress—the silence of a deep farewell; for I felt in all my pulses, as Theobald, leaning on my arm, dragged one heavy foot after the other, that he was looking his last. When we came out he was so exhausted that instead of taking him to my hotel to dine I called a cab and drove him straight to his own poor lodging. He had sunk into the deepest lethargy; he lay back in the vehicle with his eyes closed, as pale as death, his faint breathing interrupted at intervals by a **gasp** like a smothered sob or a vain attempt to speak. With the **help** of the old woman who had admitted me before and who **emerged** from a dark back court I contrived to lead him up the long, steep staircase and lay him on his wretched bed. To her I gave him in charge while I prepared in all haste to call in a doctor. But she followed me out of the room with a pitiful clasping of her hands.

"Poor, dear, blessed gentleman," she wailed—"is he dying?"

"Possibly. How long has he been so bad?"

"Since a certain night he passed ten days ago. I came up in

the morning to make his poor bed, and found him sitting up in his clothes before that great dirty canvas he keeps there. Poor, dear, strange man, he says his prayers to it! He hadn't been to bed—nor even since then, as you may say. What has happened to him? Has he found out about *quella cattiva donna*?" she panted with a glittering eye and a toothless grin.

"Prove at least that one old woman can be faithful," I said, "and watch him well till I come back." My return was delayed through the absence of the English physician, who was away on a round of visits and whom I vainly pursued from house to house before I overtook him. I brought him to Theobald's bedside none too soon. A violent fever had seized our patient, whose case was evidently grave. A couple of hours later on I knew he had brain fever. From this moment I was with him constantly, but I am far from wishing fully to report his illness. Excessively painful to witness, it was happily brief. Life burned out in delirium. One night in particular that I passed at his pillow, listening to his wild snatches of regret, of aspiration, of rapture and awe at the phantasmal pictures with which his brain seemed to swarm, comes back to my memory now like some stray page from a lost masterpiece of tragedy. Before a week was over we had buried him in the little Protestant cemetery on the way to Fiesole. Madonna Serafina, whom I had caused to be informed of his state, had come in person, I was told, to inquire about its progress; but she was absent from his funeral, which was attended but by a scanty concourse of mourners. Half-a-dozen old Florentine sojourners, in spite of the prolonged estrangement that had preceded his death, had felt the kindly impulse to honor his grave. Among them was my friend Mrs. Coventry, whom I found, on my departure, waiting in her carriage at the gate of the cemetery.

"Well," she said, relieving at last with a significant smile the solemnity of our immediate greeting, "and the greatest of all Madonnas? Have you seen her after all?"

"I've seen her," I said; "she's mine—by bequest. But I shall never show her to you."

"And why not, pray?"

"Because you wouldn't understand her!"

She rather glared at me. "Upon my word you're polite!"

"Pardon me—I'm sad and vexed and bitter." And with reprehensible rudeness I marched away. I was impatient to leave Florence; my friend's blighted spirit met my eyes in all aspects. I had packed my trunk to start for Rome that night, and meanwhile, to beguile my unrest, I aimlessly paced the streets. Chance led me at last to the church of San Lorenzo. Remembering poor Theobald's phrase about Michelangelo—"He did his best at a venture"—I went in and turned my steps to the chapel of the tombs. Viewing in sadness the sadness of its immortal treasures, I could say to myself while I stood there that they needed no ampler commentary than those simple words. As I passed through the church again to leave it, a woman, turning away from one of the side altars, met me face to face. The black shawl depending from her head draped becomingly the handsome face of Madonna Serafina. She stopped as she recognized me, and I saw she wished to speak. Her brow was lighted and her ample bosom heaved in a way that seemed to portend a certain sharpness of reproach. But some expression of my own then drew the sting from her resentment, and she addressed me in a tone in which bitterness was tempered by an acceptance of the anticlimax that had been after all so long and so wondrously postponed. "I know it was you, now, who separated us," she said. "It was a pity he ever brought you to see me! Of course, you couldn't think of me as he did. Well, the Lord gave him, the Lord has taken him. I've just paid for a nine days' mass for his soul. And I can tell you this, signore—I never deceived him. Who put it into his head that I was made to live on holy thoughts and fine phrases? It was his own imagination, and it pleased him to think so. Did he suffer much?" she added more softly and after a pause.

"His sufferings were great, but they were short."

"And did he speak of me?" She had hesitated and dropped her eyes; she raised them with her question, and revealed in their somber stillness a gleam of feminine confidence which for the moment revived and enhanced her beauty. Poor Theobald!

Whatever name he had given his passion it was still her fine eyes that had charmed him.

"Be contented, madam," I answered gravely.

She lowered her lids again and was silent. Then exhaling a full, rich sigh as she gathered her shawl together: "He was a magnificent genius!"

I bowed assent and we separated.

Passing through a narrow side street on my way back to my hotel, I noted above a doorway a sign that it seemed to me I had read before. I suddenly remembered it for identical with the superscription of a card that I had carried for an hour in my waistcoat pocket. On the threshold stood the ingenious artist whose claims to public favor were thus distinctly signalized, smoking a pipe in the evening air and giving the finishing polish with a bit of rag to one of his inimitable "combinations." I caught the expressive curl of a couple of tails. He recognized me, removed his little red cap with an obsequious bow, and motioned me to enter his studio. I returned his salute and passed on, vexed with the apparition. For a week afterwards, whenever I was seized among the ruins of triumphant Rome with some peculiarly poignant memory of Theobald's transcendent illusions and deplorable failure, I seemed to catch the other so impertinent and so cynical echo: "Cats and monkeys, monkeys and cats—all human life is there!"

I

The view from the terrace at Saint-Germain-en-Laye is immense and famous. Paris lies spread before you in dusky vastness, domed and fortified, glittering here and there through her light vapors and girdled with her silver Seine. Behind you is a park of stately symmetry, and behind that a forest where you may lounge through turfy avenues and light-checked glades and quite forget that you are within half an hour of the boulevards. One afternoon, however, in midspring, some five years ago, a young man seated on the terrace had preferred to keep this in mind. His eyes were fixed in idle wistfulness on the mighty human hive before him. He was fond of rural things, and he had come to Saint-Germain a week before to meet the spring halfway; but though he could boast of a six months' acquaintance with the great city, he never looked at it from his present vantage without a sense of curiosity still unappeased. There were moments when it seemed to him that not to be there just then was to miss some thrilling chapter of experience. And yet his winter's experience had been rather fruitless and he had closed the book almost with a yawn. Though not in the least a cynic he was what one may call a disappointed observer, and he never chose the right-hand road without beginning to suspect after an hour's wayfaring that the left would have been the better. He now had a dozen minds to go to Paris for the evening, to dine at the Café Brébant and repair afterwards to the Gymnase and listen to the latest exposition of the duties of the injured husband. He would probably have risen

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to execute this project if he had not noticed a little girl who, wandering along the terrace, had suddenly stopped short and begun to gaze at him with round-eyed frankness. For a moment he was simply amused, the child's face denoting such helpless wonderment; the next he was agreeably surprised. "Why, this is my friend Maggie," he said; "I see you've not forgotten me."

Maggie, after a short parley, was induced to seal her remembrance with a kiss. Invited then to explain her appearance at Saint-Germain, she embarked on a recital in which the general, according to the infantine method, was so fatally sacrificed to the particular that Longmore looked about him for a superior source of information. He found it in Maggie's mamma, who was seated with another lady at the opposite end of the terrace; so, taking the child by the hand, he led her back to her companions.

Maggie's mamma was a young American lady, as you would immediately have perceived, with a pretty and friendly face and a great elegance of fresh finery. She greeted Longmore with amazement and joy, mentioning his name to her friend and bidding him bring a chair and sit with them. The other lady, in whom, though she was equally young and perhaps even prettier, muslins and laces and feathers were less of a feature, remained silent, stroking the hair of the little girl, whom she had drawn against her knee. She had never heard of Longmore, but she now took in that her companion had crossed the ocean with him, had met him afterwards in traveling and—having left her husband in Wall Street—was indebted to him for sundry services. Maggie's mamma turned from time to time and smiled at this lady with an air of invitation; the latter smiled back and continued gracefully to say nothing. For ten minutes, meanwhile, Longmore felt a revival of interest in his old acquaintance; then (as mild riddles are more amusing than mere common-places) it gave way to curiosity about her friend. His eyes wandered; her volubility shook a sort of sweetness out of the friend's silence.

The stranger was perhaps not obviously a beauty nor obvi-

ously an American, but essentially both for the really seeing eye. She was slight and fair and, though naturally pale, was delicately flushed just now, as by the effect of late agitation. What chiefly struck Longmore in her face was the union of a pair of beautifully gentle, almost languid gray eyes with a mouth that was all expression and intention. Her forehead was a trifle more expansive than belongs to classic types, and her thick brown hair dressed out of the fashion, just then even more ugly than usual. Her throat and bust were slender, but all the more in harmony with certain rapid, charming movements of the head, which she had a way of throwing back every now and then with an air of attention and a sidelong glance from her dovelike eyes. She seemed at once alert and indifferent, contemplative and restless, and Longmore very soon discovered that if she was not a brilliant beauty she was at least a most attaching one. This very impression made him magnanimous. He was certain he had interrupted a confidential conversation, and judged it discreet to withdraw, having first learned from Maggie's mamma—Mrs. Draper—that she was to take the six o'clock train back to Paris. He promised to meet her at the station.

He kept his appointment, and Mrs. Draper arrived betimes, accompanied by her friend. The latter, however, made her farewells at the door and drove away again, giving Longmore time only to raise his hat. "Who is she?" he asked with visible ardor, as he brought the traveler her tickets.

"Come and see me tomorrow at the Hôtel de l'Empire," she answered, "and I'll tell you all about her." The force of this offer in making him punctual at the Hôtel de l'Empire Longmore doubtless never exactly measured; and it was perhaps well he was vague, for he found his friend, who was on the point of leaving Paris, so distracted by procrastinating milliners and perjured lingers that coherence had quite deserted her. "You must find Saint-Germain dreadfully dull," she nevertheless had the presence of mind to say as he was going. "Why won't you come with me to London?"

"Introduce me to Madame de Mauves," he answered, "and

Saint-Germain will quite satisfy me." All he had learned was the lady's name and residence.

"Ah, she, poor woman, won't make your affair a carnival. She's very unhappy," said Mrs. Draper.

Longmore's further inquiries were arrested by the arrival of a young lady with a bandbox; but he went away with the promise of a note of introduction, to be immediately dispatched to him at Saint-Germain.

He then waited a week, but the note never came, and he felt how little it was for Mrs. Draper to complain of engagements unperformed. He lounged on the terrace and walked in the forest, studied suburban street life and made a languid attempt to investigate the records of the court of the exiled Stuarts; but he spent most of his time in wondering where Madame de Mauves lived and whether she ever walked on the terrace. Sometimes, he was at last able to recognize; for one afternoon toward dusk he made her out from a distance, arrested there alone and leaning against the low wall. In his momentary hesitation to approach her there was almost a shade of trepidation, but his curiosity was not chilled by such a measure of the effect of a quarter of an hour's acquaintance. She at once recovered their connection, on his drawing near, and showed it with the frankness of a person unprovided with a great choice of contacts. Her dress, her expression, were the same as before; her charm came out like that of fine music on a second hearing. She soon made conversation easy by asking him for news of Mrs. Draper. Longmore told her that he was daily expecting news, and after a pause mentioned the promised note of introduction.

"It seems less necessary now," he said—"for me at least. But for you—I should have liked you to know the good things our friend would probably have been able to say about me."

"If it arrives at last," she answered, "you must come and see me and bring it. If it doesn't, you must come without it."

Then, as she continued to linger through the thickening twilight, she explained that she was waiting for her husband, who was to arrive in the train from Paris and who often passed along the terrace on his way home. Longmore well remembered that

Mrs. Draper had spoken of uneasy things in her life, and he found it natural to guess that this same husband was the source of them. Edified by his six months in Paris, "What else is possible," he put it, "for a sweet American girl who marries an unholy foreigner?"

But this quiet dependence on her lord's return rather shook his shrewdness, and it received a further check from the free confidence with which she turned to greet an approaching figure. Longmore distinguished in the fading light a stoutish gentleman, on the fair side of forty, in a high gray hat, whose countenance, obscure as yet against the quarter from which it came, mainly presented to view the large outward twist of its mustache. M. de Mauves saluted his wife with punctilious gallantry and, having bowed to Longmore, asked her several questions in French. Before taking his offered arm to walk to their carriage, which was in waiting at the gate of the terrace, she introduced our hero as a friend of Mrs. Draper and also a fellow countryman, whom she hoped they might have the pleasure of seeing, as she said, *chez eux*. M. de Mauves responded briefly, but civilly, in fair English, and led his wife away.

Longmore watched him as he went, renewing the curl of his main facial feature—watched him with an irritation devoid of any mentionable ground. His one pretext for gnashing his teeth would have been in his apprehension that this gentleman's worst English might prove a matter to shame his own best French. For reasons involved apparently in the very structure of his being Longmore found a colloquial use of that idiom as insecure as the back of a restive horse, and was obliged to take his exercise, as he was aware, with more tension than grace. He reflected meanwhile with comfort that Madame de Mauves and he had a common tongue, and his anxiety yielded to his relief at finding on his table that evening a letter from Mrs. Draper. It enclosed a short, formal missive to Madame de Mauves, but the epistle itself was copious and confidential. She had deferred writing till she reached London, where for a week, of course, she had found other amusements.

"I think it's the sight of so many women here who don't look

at all like her that has reminded me by the law of contraries of my charming friend at Saint-Germain and my promise to introduce you to her," she wrote. "I believe I spoke to you of her rather blighted state, and I wondered afterwards whether I hadn't been guilty of a breach of confidence. But you would certainly have arrived at guesses of your own, and, besides, she has never told me her secrets. The only one she ever pretended to was that she's the happiest creature in the world, after assuring me of which, poor thing, she went off into tears; so that I prayed to be delivered from such happiness. It's the miserable story of an American girl born neither to submit basely nor to rebel crookedly marrying a shining, sinful Frenchman who believes a woman must do one or the other of those things. The lightest of us have a ballast that they can't imagine, and the poorest a moral imagination that they don't require. She was romantic and perverse—she thought the world she had been brought up in too vulgar or at least too prosaic. To have a decent home life isn't perhaps the greatest of adventures; but I think she wishes nowadays she hadn't gone in quite so desperately for thrills. M. de Mauves cared of course for nothing but her money, which he's spending royally on his *menus plaisirs*. I hope you appreciate the compliment I pay you when I recommend you to go and cheer up a lady domestically dejected. Believe me, I've given no other man a proof of this esteem; so if you were to take me in an inferior sense I would never speak to you again. Prove to this fine, sore creature that our manners may have all the grace without wanting to make such selfish terms for it. She avoids society and lives quite alone, seeing no one but a horrible French sister-in-law. Do let me hear that you've made her patience a little less absent-minded. Make her *want* to forget; make her like you."

This ingenious appeal left the young man uneasy. He found himself in presence of more complications than had been in his reckoning. To call on Madame de Mauves with this present knowledge struck him as akin to fishing in troubled waters. He was of modest composition, and yet he asked himself whether an appearance of attentions from any gallant gentleman mightn't

give another twist to her tangle. A flattering sense of unwonted opportunity, however—of such a possible value constituted for him as he had never before been invited to rise to—made him with the lapse of time more confident, possibly more reckless. It was too inspiring not to act upon the idea of kindling a truer light in his fair countrywoman's slow smile, and at least he hoped to persuade her that even a raw representative of the social order she had not done justice to was not necessarily a mere fortuitous collocation of atoms. He immediately called on her.

II

She had been placed for her education, fourteen years before, in a Parisian convent, by a widowed mamma who was fonder of Homburg and Nice than of letting out tucks in the frocks of a vigorously growing daughter. Here, besides various elegant accomplishments—the art of wearing a train, of composing a bouquet, of presenting a cup of tea—she acquired a certain turn of the imagination which might have passed for a sign of precocious worldliness. She dreamed of marrying a man of hierarchical “rank”—not for the pleasure of hearing herself called *Madame la Vicomtesse*, for which it seemed to her she should never greatly care, but because she had a romantic belief that the enjoyment of inherited and transmitted consideration, consideration attached to the fact of birth, would be the direct guarantee of an ideal delicacy of feeling. She supposed it would be found that the state of being noble does actually enforce the famous obligation. Romances are rarely worked out in such transcendent good faith, and Euphemia's excuse was the prime purity of her moral vision. She was essentially incorruptible, and she took this pernicious conceit to her bosom very much as if it had been a dogma revealed by a white-winged angel. Even after experience had given her a hundred rude hints she found it easier to believe in fables, when they had a certain nobleness of meaning, than in well-attested but sordid facts. She believed that a gentleman with a long pedigree must be of necessity a very fine fellow, and enjoyment of a chance to carry further a

family chronicle begun ever so far back must be, as a consciousness, a source of the most beautiful impulses. It wasn't therefore only that *noblesse oblige*, she thought, as regards yourself, but that it ensures as nothing else does in respect to your wife. She had never, at the start, spoken to a nobleman in her life, and these convictions were but a matter of extravagant theory. They were the fruit, in part, of the perusal of various ultramontane works of fiction—the only ones admitted to the convent library—in which the hero was always a Legitimist vicomte who fought duels by the dozen but went twice a month to confession; and in part of the strong social scent of the gossip of her companions, many of them *filles de haut lieu* who, in the convent garden, after Sundays at home, depicted their brothers and cousins as Prince Charmings and young Paladins. Euphemia listened and said nothing; she shrouded her visions of matrimony under a coronet in the silence that mostly surrounds all ecstatic faith. She was not of that type of young lady who is easily induced to declare that her husband must be six feet high and a little near-sighted, part his hair in the middle, and have amber lights in his beard. To her companions her flights of fancy seemed short, rather, and poor and untutored; and even the fact that she was a sprig of the transatlantic democracy never sufficiently explained her apathy on social questions. She had a mental image of that son of the Crusaders who was to suffer her to adore him, but like many an artist who has produced a masterpiece of idealization she shrank from exposing it to public criticism. It was the portrait of a gentleman rather ugly than handsome and rather poor than rich. But his ugliness was to be nobly expressive and his poverty delicately proud. She had a fortune of her own which, at the proper time, after fixing on her in eloquent silence those fine eyes that were to soften the feudal severity of his visage, he was to accept with a world of stifled protestations. One condition alone she was to make—that he should have “race” in a state as documented as it was possible to have it. On this she would stake her happiness; and it was so to happen that several accidents conspired to give convincing color to this artless philosophy.

Inclined to long pauses and slow approaches herself, Euphemia was a great sitter at the feet of breathless volubility, and there were moments when she fairly hung upon the lips of Mademoiselle Marie de Mauves. Her intimacy with this chosen schoolmate was founded on the perception—all her own—that their differences were just the right ones. Mademoiselle de Mauves was very positive, very shrewd, very ironical, very French—everything that Euphemia felt herself unpardonable for not being. During her Sundays *en ville* she had examined the world and judged it, and she imparted her impressions to our attentive heroine with an agreeable mixture of enthusiasm and skepticism. She was, moreover, a handsome and well-grown person, on whom Euphemia's ribbons and trinkets had a trick of looking better than on their slender proprietress. She had finally the supreme merit of being a rigorous example of the virtue of exalted birth, having, as she did, ancestors honorably mentioned by Joinville and Commynes, and a stately grandmother with a hooked nose who came up with her after the holidays from a veritable *castel* in Auvergne. It seemed to our own young woman that these attributes made her friend more at home in the world than if she had been the daughter of even the most prosperous grocer. A certain aristocratic impudence Mademoiselle de Mauves abundantly possessed, and her raids among her friend's finery were quite in the spirit of her baronial ancestors in the twelfth century—a spirit regarded by Euphemia but as a large way of understanding friendship, a freedom from conformities without style, and one that would sooner or later express itself in acts of surprising magnanimity. There doubtless prevailed in the breast of Mademoiselle de Mauves herself a dimmer vision of the large securities that Euphemia envied her. She was to become later in life so accomplished a schemer that her sense of having further heights to scale might well have waked up early. The especially fine appearance made by our heroine's ribbons and trinkets as her friend wore them ministered to pleasure on both sides, and the spell was not of a nature to be menaced by the young American's general gentleness. The concluding motive of Marie's writing to her grand-

mamma to invite Euphemia for a three weeks' holiday to the *castel* in Auvergne involved, however, the subtlest considerations. Mademoiselle de Mauves indeed, at this time seventeen years of age and capable of views as wide as her wants, was as proper a figure as could possibly have been found for the foreground of a scene artfully designed; and Euphemia, whose years were of like number, asked herself if a right harmony with such a place mightn't come by humble prayer. It is a proof of the sincerity of the latter's aspirations that the *castel* was not a shock to her faith. It was neither a cheerful nor a luxurious abode, but it was as full of wonders as a box of old heirlooms or objects "willed." It had battered towers and an empty moat, a rusty drawbridge and a court paved with crooked grass-grown slabs over which the antique coach wheels of the lady with the hooked nose seemed to awaken the echoes of the seventeenth century. Euphemia was not frightened out of her dream; she had the pleasure of seeing all the easier passages translated into truth, as the learner of a language begins with the common words. She had a taste for old servants, old anecdotes, old furniture, faded household colors and sweetly stale odors—musty treasures in which the Château de Mauves abounded. She made a dozen sketches in water colors after her conventual pattern; but sentimentally, as one may say, she was forever sketching with a freer hand.

Old Madame de Mauves had nothing severe but her nose, and she seemed to Euphemia—what indeed she had every claim to pass for—the very image and pattern of an "historical character." Belonging to a great order of things, she patronized the young stranger who was ready to sit all day at her feet and listen to anecdotes of the *bon temps* and quotations from the family chronicles. Madame de Mauves was a very honest old woman; she uttered her thoughts with ancient plainness. One day after pushing back Euphemia's shining locks and blinking with some tenderness from behind an immense *face-à-main* that acted as for the relegation of the girl herself to the glass case of a museum, she declared with an energetic shake of the head that she didn't know what to make of such a little person. And in answer to the

little person's evident wonder, "I should like to advise you," she said, "but you seem to me so all of a piece that I'm afraid that if I advise you I shall spoil you. It's easy to see you're not one of us. I don't know whether you're better, but you seem to me to have been wound up by some key that isn't kept by your governess or your confessor or even your mother, but that you wear by a fine black ribbon round your own neck. Little persons in my day—when they were stupid they were very docile, but when they were clever they were very sly! You're clever enough, I imagine, and yet if I guessed all your secrets at this moment is there one I should have to frown at? I can tell you a wickeder one than any you've discovered for yourself. If you wish to live at ease in the *doux pays de France*, don't trouble too much about the key of your conscience or even about your conscience itself—I mean your own particular one. You'll fancy it saying things it won't help your case to hear. They'll make you sad, and when you're sad you'll grow plain, and when you're plain you'll grow bitter, and when you're bitter you'll be *peu aimable*. I was brought up to think that a woman's first duty is to be infinitely so, and the happiest women I've known have been in fact those who performed this duty faithfully. As you're not a Catholic I suppose you can't be a devotee; and if you don't take life as a fifty years' mass the only way to take it's as a game of skill. Listen to this. Not to lose at the game of life you must—I don't say cheat, but not be too sure your neighbor won't, and not be shocked out of your self-possession if he does. Don't lose, my dear—I beseech you don't lose. Be neither suspicious nor credulous, and if you find your neighbor peeping don't cry out; only very politely wait your own chance. I've had my revenge more than once in my day, but I really think the sweetest I could take, *en somme*, against the past I've known, would be to have your blest innocence profit by my experience."

This was rather bewildering advice, but Euphemia understood it too little to be either edified or frightened. She sat listening to it very much as she would have listened to the speeches of an old lady in a comedy whose diction should strikingly corre-

spond to the form of her high-backed armchair and the fashion of her coif. Her indifference was doubly dangerous, for Madame de Mauves spoke at the instance of coming events, and her words were the result of a worry of scruples—scruples in the light of which Euphemia was on the one hand too tender a victim to be sacrificed to an ambition and the prosperity of her own house, on the other too precious a heritage to be sacrificed to an hesitation. The prosperity in question had suffered repeated and grievous breaches and the menaced institution been overmuch pervaded by that cold comfort in which people are obliged to balance dinner-table allusions to feudal ancestors against the absence of side dishes; a state of things the sorrier as the family was now mainly represented by a gentleman whose appetite was large and who justly maintained that its historic glories hadn't been established by underfed heroes.

Three days after Euphemia's arrival Richard de Mauves, coming down from Paris to pay his respects to his grandmother, treated our heroine to her first encounter with a gentilhomme in the flesh. On appearing he kissed his grandmother's hand with a smile which caused her to draw it away with dignity, and set Euphemia, who was standing by, to ask herself what could have happened between them. Her unanswered wonder was but the beginning of a long chain of puzzlements, but the reader is free to know that the smile of M. de Mauves was a reply to a post-script affixed by the old lady to a letter addressed to him by her granddaughter as soon as the girl had been admitted to justify the latter's promises. Mademoiselle de Mauves brought her letter to her grandmother for approval, but obtained no more than was expressed in a frigid nod. The old lady watched her with this coldness while she proceeded to seal the letter, then suddenly bade her open it again and bring her a pen.

"Your sister's flatteries are all nonsense," she wrote; "the young lady's far too good for you, *mauvais sujet* beyond redemption. If you've a particle of conscience you'll not come and disturb the repose of an angel of innocence."

The other relative of the subject of this warning, who had read these lines, made up a little face as she freshly indited the

address; but she laid down her pen with a confident nod which might have denoted that by her judgment her brother was appealed to on the ground of a principle that didn't exist in him. And "if you meant what you said," the young man on his side observed to his grandmother on his first private opportunity, "it would have been simpler not to have sent the letter."

Put out of humor perhaps by this gross impugnement of her sincerity, the head of the family kept her room on pretexts during a greater part of Euphemia's stay, so that the latter's angelic innocence was left all to her grandson's mercy. It suffered no worse mischance, however, than to be prompted to intenser communion with itself. Richard de Mauves was the hero of the young girl's romance made real, and so completely accordant with this creature of her imagination that she felt afraid of him almost as she would have been of a figure in a framed picture who should have stepped down from the wall. He was now thirty-three—young enough to suggest possibilities of ardent activity and old enough to have formed opinions that a simple woman might deem it an intellectual privilege to listen to. He was perhaps a trifle handsomer than Euphemia's rather grim Quixotic ideal, but a very few days reconciled her to his good looks as effectually as they would have reconciled her to a characterized want of them. He was quiet, grave, eminently distinguished. He spoke little, but his remarks, without being sententious, had a nobleness of tone that caused them to re-echo in the young girl's ears at the end of the day. He paid her very little direct attention, but his chance words—when he only asked her if she objected to his cigarette—were accompanied by a smile of extraordinary kindness.

It happened that shortly after his arrival, riding an unruly horse which Euphemia had with shy admiration watched him mount in the castle yard, he was thrown with a violence which, without disparaging his skill, made him for a fortnight an interesting invalid lounging in the library with a bandaged knee. To beguile his confinement the accomplished young stranger was repeatedly induced to sing for him, which she did with a small natural tremor that might have passed for the finish of vocal art.

He never overwhelmed her with compliments, but he listened with unfailing attention, remembered all her melodies and would sit humming them to himself. While his imprisonment lasted indeed he passed hours in her company, making her feel not unlike some unfriended artist who has suddenly gained the opportunity to devote a fortnight to the study of a great model. Euphemia studied with noiseless diligence what she supposed to be the "character" of M. de Mauves, and the more she looked the more fine lights and shades she seemed to behold in this masterpiece of nature. M. de Mauves's character indeed, whether from a sense of being so generously and intensely taken for granted, or for reasons which bid graceful defiance to analysis, had never been so much on show, even to the very casual critic lodged, as might be said, in an out-of-the-way corner of it; it seemed really to reflect the purity of Euphemia's pious opinion. There had been nothing especially to admire in the state of mind in which he left Paris—a settled resolve to marry a young person whose charms might or might not justify his sister's account of them, but who was mistress, at the worst, of a couple of hundred thousand francs a year. He had not counted out sentiment—if she pleased him so much the better; but he had left a meager margin for it and would hardly have admitted that so excellent a match could be improved by it. He was a robust and serene skeptic, and it was a singular fate for a man who believed in nothing to be so tenderly believed in. What his original faith had been he could hardly have told you, for as he came back to his childhood's home to mend his fortunes by pretending to fall in love he was a thoroughly perverse creature and overlaid with more corruptions than a summer day's questioning of his conscience would have put to flight. Ten years' pursuit of pleasure, which a bureau full of unpaid bills was all he had to show for, had pretty well stifled the natural lad whose violent will and generous temper might have been shaped by a different pressure to some such showing as would have justified a romantic faith. So should he have exhaled the natural fragrance of a late-blooming flower of hereditary honor. His violence indeed had been subdued and he had learned to be irreproachably

polite; but he had lost the fineness of his generosity, and his politeness, which in the long run society paid for, was hardly more than a form of luxurious egotism, like his fondness for ciphered pocket handkerchiefs, lavender gloves, and other fopperies by which shopkeepers remained out of pocket. In after years he was terribly polite to his wife. He had formed himself, as the phrase was, and the form prescribed to him by the society into which his birth and his tastes had introduced him was marked by some peculiar features. That which mainly concerns us is its classification of the fairer half of humanity as objects not essentially different—say from those very lavender gloves that are soiled in an evening and thrown away. To do M. de Mauves justice, he had in the course of time encountered in the feminine character such plentiful evidence of its pliant softness and fine adjustability that idealism naturally seemed to him a losing game.

Euphemia, as he lay on his sofa, struck him as by no means contradictory; she simply reminded him that very young women are generally innocent and that this is on the whole the most potent source of their attraction. Her innocence moved him to perfect consideration, and it seemed to him that if he shortly became her husband it would be exposed to a danger the less. Old Madame de Mauves, who flattered herself that in this whole matter she was very laudably rigid, might almost have taken a lesson from the delicacy he practiced. For two or three weeks her grandson was well nigh a blushing boy again. He watched from behind the *Figaro*, he admired and desired and held his tongue. He found himself not in the least moved to a flirtation; he had no wish to trouble the waters he proposed to transfuse into the golden cup of matrimony. Sometimes a word, a look, a gesture of Euphemia's gave him the oddest sense of being, or of seeming at least, almost bashful; for she had a way of not dropping her eyes according to the mysterious virginal mechanism, of not fluttering out of the room when she found him there alone, of treating him rather as a glorious than as a pernicious influence—a radiant frankness of demeanor in fine, despite an infinite natural reserve, which it seemed at once graceless not to be com-

plimentary about and indelicate not to take for granted. In this way had been wrought in the young man's mind a vague unwonted resonance of soft impressions, as we may call it, which resembled the happy stir of the change from dreaming pleasantly to waking happily. His imagination was touched; he was very fond of music and he now seemed to give easy ear to some of the sweetest he had ever heard. In spite of the bore of being laid up with a lame knee he was in better humor than he had known for months; he lay smoking cigarettes and listening to the nightingales with the satisfied smile of one of his country neighbors whose big ox should have taken the prize at a fair. Every now and then, with an impatient suspicion of the resemblance, he declared himself pitifully *bête*; but he was under a charm that braved even the supreme penalty of seeming ridiculous. One morning he had half an hour's tête-à-tête with his grandmother's confessor, a soft-voiced old Abbé whom, for reasons of her own, Madame de Mauves had suddenly summoned and had left waiting in the drawing room while she rearranged her curls. His reverence, going up to the old lady, assured her that M. le Comte was in a most edifying state of mind and the likeliest subject for the operation of grace. This was a theological interpretation of the Count's unusual equanimity. He had always lazily wondered what priests were good for, and he now remembered, with a sense of especial obligation to the Abbé, that they were excellent for marrying people.

A day or two after this he left off his bandages and tried to walk. He made his way into the garden and hobbled successfully along one of the alleys, but in the midst of his progress was pulled up by a spasm of pain which forced him to stop and call for help. In an instant Euphemia came tripping along the path and offered him her arm with the frankest solicitude.

"Not to the house," he said, taking it; "further on, to the bosquet." This choice was prompted by her having immediately confessed that she had seen him leave the house, had feared an accident, and had followed him on tiptoe.

"Why didn't you join me?" he had asked, giving her a look in which admiration was no longer disguised and yet felt itself

half at the mercy of her replying that a *jeune fille* shouldn't be seen following a gentleman. But it drew a breath which filled its lungs for a long time afterwards when she replied simply that if she had overtaken him he might have accepted her arm out of politeness, whereas she wished to have the pleasure of seeing him walk alone.

The bosquet was covered with an odorous tangle of blossoming creepers, and a nightingale overhead was shaking out love notes with a profusion that made the Count feel his own conduct the last word of propriety. "I've always heard that in America, when a man wishes to marry a young girl, he offers himself simply face to face and without ceremony—without parents and uncles and aunts and cousins sitting round in a circle."

"Why, I believe so," said Euphemia, staring and too surprised to be alarmed.

"Very well, then—suppose our arbor here to be your great sensible country. I offer you my hand *à l'Américaine*. It will make me intensely happy to feel you accept it."

Whether Euphemia's acceptance was in the American manner is more than I can say; I incline to think that for fluttering, grateful, trustful, softly amazed young hearts there is only one manner all over the world.

That evening, in the massive turret chamber it was her happiness to inhabit, she wrote a dutiful letter to her mamma, and had just sealed it when she was sent for by Madame de Mauves. She found this ancient lady seated in her boudoir in a lavender satin gown and with her candles all lighted as for the keeping of some fête. "Are you very happy?" the old woman demanded, making Euphemia sit down before her.

"I'm almost afraid to say so, lest I should wake myself up."

"May you never wake up, *belle enfant*," Madame de Mauves grandly returned. "This is the first marriage **ever** made in our family in this way—by a Comte de Mauves **proposing** to a young girl in an arbor like Jeannot and Jeannette. It has not been our way of doing things, and people may say it wants frankness. My grandson tells me he regards it—for the conditions—as the perfection of good taste. Very well. I'm a very

old woman, and if your differences should ever be as marked as your agreements I shouldn't care to see them. But I should be sorry to die and think you were going to be unhappy. You can't be, my dear, beyond a certain point; because, though in this world the Lord sometimes makes light of our expectations, he never altogether ignores our deserts. But you're very young and innocent and easy to dazzle. There never was a man in the world—among the saints themselves—as good as you believe my grandson. But he's a *galant homme* and a gentleman, and I've been talking to him tonight. To you I want to say this—that you're to forget the worldly rubbish I talked the other day about the happiness of frivolous women. It's not the kind of happiness that would suit you, *ma toute-belle*. Whatever befalls you, promise me this: to be, to remain, your own sincere little self only, charming in your own serious little way. The Comtesse de Mauves will be none the worse for it. Your brave little self, understand, in spite of everything—bad precepts and bad examples, bad fortune and even bad usage. Be persistently and patiently just what the good God has made you, and even one of us—and one of those who is most what we *are*—will do you justice!"

Euphemia remembered this speech in after years, and more than once, wearily closing her eyes, she seemed to see the old woman sitting upright in her faded finery and smiling grimly like one of the Fates who sees the wheel of fortune turning up her favorite event. But at the moment it had for her simply the proper gravity of the occasion: this was the way, she supposed, in which lucky young girls were addressed on their engagement by wise old women of quality.

At her convent, to which she immediately returned, she found a letter from her mother which disconcerted her far more than the remarks of Madame de Mauves. Who were these people, Mrs. Cleve demanded, who had presumed to talk to her daughter of marriage without asking her leave? Questionable gentlefolk plainly; the best French people never did such things. Euphemia would return straightway to her convent, shut herself up, and await her own arrival. It took Mrs. Cleve three weeks to travel

from Nice to Paris, and during this time the young girl had no communication with her lover beyond accepting a bouquet of violets marked with his initials and left by a female friend. "I've not brought you up with such devoted care," she declared to her daughter at their first interview, "to marry a presumptuous and penniless Frenchman. I shall take you straight home and you'll please forget M. de Mauves."

Mrs. Cleve received that evening at her hotel a visit from this personage which softened her wrath but failed to modify her decision. He had very good manners, but she was sure he had horrible morals; and the lady, who had been a good-natured censor on her own account, felt a deep and real need to sacrifice her daughter to propriety. She belonged to that large class of Americans who make light of their native land in familiar discourse but are startled back into a sense of having blasphemed when they find Europeans taking them at their word. "I know the type, my dear," she said to her daughter, with a competent nod. "He won't beat you. Sometimes you'll wish he would."

Euphemia remained solemnly silent, for the only answer she felt capable of making was that her mother's mind was too small a measure of things and her lover's type an historic, a social masterpiece that it took some mystic illumination to appreciate. A person who confounded him with the common throng of her watering-place acquaintance was not a person to argue with. It struck the girl she had simply no cause to plead; her cause was in the Lord's hands and in those of M. de Mauves.

This agent of Providence had been irritated and mortified by Mrs. Cleve's opposition, and hardly knew how to handle an adversary who failed to perceive that a member of his family gave of necessity more than he received. But he had obtained information on his return to Paris which exalted the uses of humility. Euphemia's fortune, wonderful to say, was greater than its fame, and in view of such a prize, even a member of his family could afford to take a snubbing.

The young man's tact, his deference, his urbane insistence, won a concession from Mrs. Cleve. The engagement was to

be put off and her daughter was to return home, be brought out and receive the homage she was entitled to and which might well take a form representing peril to the suit of this first headlong aspirant. They were to exchange neither letters nor mementoes nor messages; but if at the end of two years Euphemia had refused offers enough to attest the permanence of her attachment he should receive an invitation to address her again. This decision was promulgated in the presence of the parties interested. The Count bore himself gallantly, looking at his young friend as if he expected some tender protestation. But she only looked at him silently in return, neither weeping nor smiling nor putting out her hand. On this they separated, and as M. de Mauves walked away he declared to himself that in spite of the confounded two years he was one of the luckiest of men—to have a fiancée who to several millions of francs added such strangely beautiful eyes.

How many offers Euphemia refused but scantily concerns us—and how the young man wore his two years away. He found he required pastimes, and as pastimes were expensive he added heavily to the list of debts to be canceled by Euphemia's fortune. Sometimes, in the thick of what he had once called pleasure with a keener conviction than now, he put to himself the case of their failing him after all; and then he remembered that last mute assurance of her pale face and drew a long breath of such confidence as he felt in nothing else in the world save his own punctuality in an affair of honor.

At last, one morning, he took the express to Havre with a letter of Mrs. Cleve's in his pocket, and ten days later made his bow to mother and daughter in New York. His stay was brief, and he was apparently unable to bring himself to view what Euphemia's uncle, Mr. Butterworth, who gave her away at the altar, called our great experiment of democratic self-government, in a serious light. He smiled at everything and seemed to regard the New World as a colossal *plaisanterie*. It is true that a perpetual smile was the most natural expression of countenance for a man about to marry Euphemia Cleve.

III

Longmore's first visit seemed to open to him so large a range of quiet pleasure that he very soon paid a second, and at the end of a fortnight had spent uncounted hours in the little drawing room which Madame de Mauves rarely quitted except to drive or walk in the forest. She lived in an old-fashioned pavilion, between a high-walled court and an excessively artificial garden, beyond whose enclosure you saw a long line of treetops. Longmore liked the garden and in the mild afternoons used to move his chair through the open window to the smooth terrace which overlooked it while his hostess sat just within. Presently she would come out and wander through the narrow alleys and beside the thin-spouting fountain, and at last introduce him to a private gate in the high wall, the opening to a lane which led to the forest. Hitherwards she more than once strolled with him, bareheaded and meaning to go but twenty rods, but always going goodnaturedly further and often stretching it to the freedom of a *promenade*. They found many things to talk about, and to the pleasure of feeling the hours slip along like some silver stream Longmore was able to add the satisfaction of suspecting that he was a "resource" for Madame de Mauves. He had made her acquaintance with the sense, not wholly inspiring, that she was a woman with a painful twist in her life and that seeking her acquaintance would be like visiting at a house where there was an invalid who could bear no noise. But he very soon recognized that her grievance, if grievance it was, was not aggressive; that it was not fond of attitudes and ceremonies, and that her most earnest wish was to remember it as little as possible. He felt that even if Mrs. Draper hadn't told him she was unhappy he would have guessed it, and yet that he couldn't have pointed to his proof. The evidence was chiefly negative—she never alluded to her husband. Beyond this it seemed to him simply that her whole being was pitched in a lower key than harmonious nature had designed; she was like a powerful singer who had lost her high notes. She never drooped nor sighed nor looked unutterable things; she dealt no sarcastic digs at her fate; she

had in short none of the conscious graces of the woman wronged. Only Longmore was sure that her gentle gaiety was but the milder or sharper flush of a settled ache, and that she but tried to interest herself in his thoughts in order to escape from her own. If she had wished to irritate his curiosity and lead him to take her confidence by storm, nothing could have served her purpose better than this studied discretion. He measured the rare magnanimity of self-effacement so deliberate, he felt how few women were capable of exchanging a luxurious woe for a thankless effort. Madame de Mauves, he himself felt, wasn't sweeping the horizon for a compensation or a consoler; she had suffered a personal deception that had disgusted her with persons. She wasn't planning to get the worth of her trouble back in some other way; for the present she was proposing to live with it peaceably, reputably, and without scandal—turning the key on it occasionally as you would on a companion liable to attacks of insanity. Longmore was a man of fine senses and of a speculative spirit, leading strings that had never been slipped. He began to regard his hostess as a figure haunted by a shadow which was somehow her intenser and more authentic self. This lurking duality in her put on for him an extraordinary charm. Her delicate beauty acquired to his eye the serious cast of certain blank-browed Greek statues; and sometimes when his imagination, more than his ear, detected a vague tremor in the tone in which she attempted to make a friendly question seem to have behind it none of the hollow resonance of absent-mindedness, his marveling eyes gave her an answer more eloquent, though much less to the point, than the one she demanded.

She supplied him indeed with much to wonder about, so that he fitted, in his ignorance, a dozen high-flown theories to her apparent history. She had married for love and staked her whole soul on it; of that he was convinced. She hadn't changed her allegiance to be near Paris and her base of supplies of millinery; he was sure she had seen her perpetrated mistake in a light of which her present life, with its conveniences for shopping and its moral aridity, was the absolute negation. But by what extraordinary process of the heart—through what mys-

terious intermission of that moral instinct which may keep pace with the heart even when this organ is making unprecedented time—had she fixed her affections on an insolently frivolous Frenchman? Longmore needed no telling; he knew that M. de Mauves was both cynical and shallow; these things were stamped on his eyes, his nose, his mouth, his voice, his gesture, his step. Of Frenchwomen themselves, when all was said, our young man, full of nursed discriminations, went in no small fear; they all seemed to belong to the type of a certain fine lady to whom he had ventured to present a letter of introduction and whom, directly after his first visit to her, he had set down in his notebook as “metallic.” Why should Madame de Mauves have chosen a Frenchwoman’s lot—she whose nature had an atmospheric envelope absent even from the brightest metals? He asked her one day frankly if it had cost her nothing to transplant herself—if she weren’t oppressed with a sense of irreconcilable difference from “all these people.” She replied nothing at first, till he feared she might think it her duty to resent a question that made light of all her husband’s importances. He almost wished she would; it would seem a proof that her policy of silence had a limit.

“I almost grew up here,” she said at last, “and it was here for me those visions of the future took shape that we all have when we begin to think or to dream beyond mere playtime. As matters stand, one may be very American and yet arrange it with one’s conscience to live in Europe. My imagination perhaps—I had a little when I was younger—helped me to think I should find happiness here. And after all, for a woman, what does it signify? This isn’t America, no—this element, but it’s quite as little France. France is out there beyond the garden, France is in the town and the forest; but here, close about me, in my room and”—she paused a moment—“in my mind, it’s a nameless, and doubtless not at all remarkable, little country of my own. It’s not her country,” she added, “that makes a woman happy or unhappy.”

Madame Clairin, Euphemia’s sister-in-law, might meanwhile have been supposed to have undertaken the graceful task of

making Longmore ashamed of his uncivil jottings about her sex and nation. Mademoiselle de Mauves, bringing example to the confirmation of precept, had made a remunerative match and sacrificed her name to the millions of a prosperous and aspiring wholesale druggist—a gentleman liberal enough to regard his fortune as a moderate price for being towed into circles unpervaded by pharmaceutic odors. His system possibly was sound, but his own application of it to be deplored. M. Clairin's head was turned by his good luck. Having secured an aristocratic wife he adopted an aristocratic vice and began to gamble at the Bourse. In an evil hour he lost heavily, and then staked heavily to recover himself. But he was to learn that the law of compensation works with no such pleasing simplicity, and he rolled to the dark bottom of his folly. There he felt everything go—his wits, his courage, his probity, everything that had made him what his fatuous marriage had so promptly unmade. He walked up the Rue Vivienne with his hands in his empty pockets and stood half an hour staring confusedly up and down the brave boulevard. People brushed against him and half-a-dozen carriages almost ran over him, until at last a policeman, who had been watching him for some time, took him by the arm and led him gently away. He looked at the man's cocked hat and sword with tears in his eyes; he hoped for some practical application of the wrath of heaven, something that would express violently his dead weight of self-abhorrence. The *sergent de ville*, however, only stationed him in the embrasure of a door, out of harm's way, and walked off to supervise a financial contest between an old lady and a cabman. Poor M. Clairin had only been married a year, but he had had time to measure the great spirit of true children of the *anciens preux*. When night had fallen he repaired to the house of a friend and asked for a night's lodging; and as his friend, who was simply his old head bookkeeper and lived in a small way, was put to some trouble to accommodate him, "You must pardon me," the poor man said, "but I can't go home. I'm afraid of my wife!" Toward morning he blew his brains out. His widow turned the remnants of his property to better account than could have

been expected and wore the very handsomest mourning. It was for this latter reason perhaps that she was obliged to retrench at other points and accept a temporary home under her brother's roof.

Fortune had played Madame Clairin a terrible trick, but had found an adversary and not a victim. Though quite without beauty she had always had what is called the grand air, and her air from this time forth was grander than ever. As she trailed about in her sable furbelows, tossing back her well-dressed head and holding up her vigilant long-handled eyeglass, she seemed to be sweeping the whole field of society and asking herself where she should pluck her revenge. Suddenly she espied it, ready made to her hand, in poor Longmore's wealth and amiability. American dollars and American complaisance had made her brother's fortune; why shouldn't they make hers? She overestimated the wealth and misinterpreted the amiability; for she was sure a man could neither be so contented without being rich nor so "backward" without being weak. Longmore met her advances with a formal politeness that covered a good deal of unflattering discomposure. She made him feel deeply uncomfortable; and though he was at a loss to conceive how he could be an object of interest to a sharp Parisienne he had an indefinable sense of being enclosed in a magnetic circle, of having become the victim of an incantation. If Madame Clairin could have fathomed his Puritanic soul, she would have laid by her wand and her book and dismissed him for an impossible subject. She gave him a moral chill, and he never named her to himself save as that dreadful woman—that awful woman. He did justice to her grand air, but for his pleasure he preferred the small air of Madame de Mauves; and he never made her his bow, after standing frigidly passive for five minutes to one of her gracious overtures to intimacy, without feeling a peculiar desire to ramble away into the forest, fling himself down on the warm grass and, staring up at the blue sky, forget that there were any women in nature who didn't please like the swaying treetops. One day, on his arrival at the house, she met him in the court with the news that her sister-in-law was shut up with a headache

and that his visit must be for *her*. He followed her into the drawing room with the best grace at his command, and sat twirling his hat for half an hour. Suddenly he understood her; her caressing cadences were so almost explicit an invitation to solicit the charming honor of her hand. He blushed to the roots of his hair and jumped up with uncontrollable alacrity; then, dropping a glance at Madame Clairin, who sat watching him with hard eyes over the thin edge of her smile, perceived on her brow a flash of unforgiving wrath. It was not pleasing in itself, but his eyes lingered a moment, for it seemed to show off her character. What he saw in the picture frightened him and he felt himself murmur "Poor Madame de Mauves!" His departure was abrupt, and this time he really went into the forest and lay down on the grass.

After which he admired his young countrywoman more than ever; her intrinsic clearness shone out to him even through the darker shade cast over it. At the end of a month he received a letter from a friend with whom he had arranged a tour through the Low Countries, reminding him of his promise to keep their tryst at Brussels. It was only after his answer was posted that he fully measured the zeal with which he had declared that the journey must either be deferred or abandoned—since he couldn't possibly leave Saint-Germain. He took a walk in the forest and asked himself if this were indeed portentously true. Such a truth somehow made it surely his duty to march straight home and put together his effects. Poor Webster, who, he knew, had counted ardently on this excursion, was the best of men; six weeks ago he would have gone through anything to join poor Webster. It had never been in his books to throw overboard a friend whom he had loved ten years for a married woman whom he had six weeks—well, admired. It was certainly beyond question that he hung on at Saint-Germain because this admirable married woman was there; but in the midst of so much admiration what had become of his fine old power to conclude? This was the conduct of a man not judging but drifting, and he had pretended never to drift. If she were as unhappy as he believed, the active sympathy of such a man would help her

very little more than his indifference; if she were less so, she needed no help and could dispense with his professions. He was sure, moreover, that if she knew he was staying on her account she would be extremely annoyed. This very feeling indeed had much to do with making it hard to go; her displeasure would be the flush on the snow of the high, cold stoicism that touched him to the heart. At moments withal he assured himself that staying to watch her—and what else did it come to?—was simply impertinent; it was gross to keep tugging at the cover of a book so intentionally closed. Then inclination answered that some day her self-support would fail, and he had a vision of this exquisite creature calling vainly for help. He would just be her friend to any length, and it was unworthy of either to think about consequences. He was a friend, however, who nursed a brooding regret for his not having known her five years earlier, as well as a particular objection to those who had smartly anticipated him. It seemed one of fortune's most mocking strokes that she should be surrounded by persons whose only merit was that they threw every side of her, as she turned in her pain, into radiant relief.

Our young man's growing irritation made it more and more difficult for him to see any other merit than this in Richard de Mauves. And yet, disinterestedly, it would have been hard to give a name to the pitiless perversity lighted by such a conclusion, and there were times when Longmore was almost persuaded against his finer judgment that he was really the most considerate of husbands and that it was not a man's fault if his wife's love of life had pitched itself once for all in the minor key. The Count's manners were perfect, his discretion irreproachable, and he seemed never to address his companion but, sentimentally speaking, hat in hand. His tone to Longmore—as the latter was perfectly aware—was that of a *man of the world* to a *man not quite of the world*; but what it lacked in true frankness it made up in easy form. "I can't thank you enough for having overcome my wife's shyness," he more than once declared. "If we left her to do as she pleased, she would—in her youth and her beauty—bury herself all absurdly alive. Come often, and

bring your good friends and compatriots—some of them are so amusing. She'll have nothing to do with mine, but perhaps you'll be able to offer her better *son affaire*."

M. de Mauves made these speeches with a bright assurance very amazing to our hero, who had an innocent belief that a man's head may point out to him the shortcomings of his heart and make him ashamed of them. He couldn't fancy him formed both to neglect his wife and to take the derisive view of her minding it. Longmore had at any rate an exasperated sense that this nobleman thought rather the less of their interesting friend on account of that very same fine difference of nature which so deeply stirred his own sympathies. He was rarely present during the sessions of the American visitor, and he made a daily journey to Paris, where he had *de gros soucis d'affaires* as he once mentioned—with an all-embracing flourish and not in the least in the tone of apology. When he appeared, it was late in the evening and with an imperturbable air of being on the best of terms with everyone and everything, which was peculiarly annoying if you happened to have a tacit quarrel with him. If he was an honest man he was an honest man somehow spoiled for confidence. Something he had, however, that his critic vaguely envied, something in his address, splendidly positive, a manner rounded and polished by the habit of conversation and the friction of full experience, an urbanity exercised for his own sake, not for his neighbor's, which seemed the fruit of one of those strong temperaments that rule the inward scene better than the best conscience. The Count had plainly no sense for morals, and poor Longmore, who had the finest, would have been glad to borrow his recipe for appearing then so to range the whole scale of the senses. What was it that enabled him, short of being a monster with visibly cloven feet and exhaling brimstone, to misprize so cruelly a nature like his wife's and to walk about the world with such a handsome invincible grin? It was the essential grossness of his imagination, which had nevertheless helped him to such a store of neat speeches. He could be highly polite and could doubtless be damnably impertinent, but the life of the spirit was a world as closed to him as the world of great

music to a man without an ear. It was ten to one he didn't in the least understand how his wife felt; he and his smooth sister had doubtless agreed to regard their relative as a Puritanical little person, of meager aspirations and few talents, content with looking at Paris from the terrace and, as a special treat, having a countryman very much like herself to regale her with innocent echoes of their native wit. M. de Mauves was tired of his companion; he liked women who could, frankly, amuse him better. She was too dim, too delicate, too modest; she had too few arts, too little coquetry, too much charity. Lighting a cigar some day while he summed up his situation, her husband had probably decided she was incurably stupid. It was the same taste, in essence, our young man moralized, as the taste for M. Gérôme and M. Baudry in painting and for M. Gustave Flaubert and M. Charles Baudelaire in literature. The Count was a pagan and his wife a Christian, and between them an impassable gulf. He was by race and instinct a *grand seigneur*. Longmore had often heard of that historic type, and was properly grateful for an opportunity to examine it closely. It had its elegance of outline, but depended on spiritual sources so remote from those of which he felt the living gush in his own soul that he found himself gazing at it, in irreconcilable antipathy, through a dim historic mist. "I'm a modern bourgeois," he said, "and not perhaps so good a judge of how far a pretty woman's tongue may go at supper before the mirrors properly crack to hear. But I've not met one of the rarest of women without recognizing her, without making my reflection that, charm for charm, such a *manière d'être* is more 'fetching' even than the worst of Theresa's songs sung by a dissipated duchess. Wit for wit, I think mine carries me further." It was easy indeed to perceive that, as became a *grand seigneur*, M. de Mauves had a stock of social principles. He wouldn't especially have desired perhaps that his wife should compete in amateur operettas with the duchesses in question, for the most part of comparatively recent origin; but he held that a gentleman may take his amusement where he finds it, that he is quite at liberty not to find it at home, and that even an adoptive daughter of his house who should hang her head and have red

eyes and allow herself to make any other response to officious condolence than that her husband's amusements were his own affair, would have forfeited every claim to having her fingertips bowed over and kissed. And yet in spite of this definite faith Longmore figured him much inconvenienced by the Countess's avoidance of betrayals. Did it dimly occur to him that the principle of this reserve was self-control and not self-effacement? She was a model to all the inferior matrons of his line, past and to come, and an occasional "scene" from her at a manageable hour would have had something reassuring—would have attested her stupidity rather better than this mere polish of her patience.

Longmore would have given much to be able to guess how this latter secret worked, and he tried more than once, though timidly and awkwardly enough, to make out the game she was playing. She struck him as having long resisted the force of cruel evidence, and, as though succumbing to it at last, having denied herself on simple grounds of generosity the right to complain. Her faith might have perished, but the sense of her own old, deep perversity remained. He believed her thus quite capable of reproaching herself with having expected too much and of trying to persuade herself out of her bitterness by saying that her hopes had been vanities and follies and that what was before her was simply Life. "I hate tragedy," she once said to him; "I'm a dreadful coward about having to suffer or to bleed. I've always tried to believe that—without base concessions—such extremities may always somehow be dodged or indefinitely postponed. I should be willing to buy myself off, from having ever to be *overwhelmed*, by giving up—well, any amusement you like." She lived evidently in nervous apprehension of being fatally convinced—of seeing to the end of her deception. Longmore, when he thought of this, felt the force of his desire to offer her something of which she could be as sure as of the sun in heaven.

IV

His friend Webster meanwhile lost no time in accusing him of the basest infidelity and in asking him what he found at

suburban Saint-Germain to prefer to Van Eyck and Memling, Rubens and Rembrandt. A day or two after the receipt of this friend's letter he took a walk with Madame de Mauves in the forest. They sat down on a fallen log and she began to arrange into a bouquet the anemones and violets she had gathered. "I've a word here," he said at last, "from a friend whom I some time ago promised to join in Brussels. The time has come—it has passed. It finds me terribly unwilling to leave Saint-Germain."

She looked up with the immediate interest she always showed in his affairs, but with no hint of a disposition to make a personal application of his words. "Saint-Germain is pleasant enough, but are you doing yourself justice? Shan't you regret in future days that instead of traveling and seeing cities and monuments and museums and improving your mind you simply sat here—for instance—on a log and pulled my flowers to pieces?"

"What I shall regret in future days," he answered after some hesitation, "is that I should have sat here—sat here so much—and never have shown what's the matter with me. I'm fond of museums and monuments and of improving my mind, and I'm particularly fond of my friend Webster. But I can't bring myself to leave Saint-Germain without asking you a question. You must forgive me if it's indiscreet and be assured that curiosity was never more respectful. Are you really as unhappy as I imagine you to be?"

She had evidently not expected his appeal, and, making her change color, it took her unprepared. "If I strike you as unhappy," she none the less simply said, "I've been a poorer friend to you than I wished to be."

"I, perhaps, have been a better friend of yours than you've supposed," he returned. "I've admired your reserve, your courage, your studied gaiety. But I've felt the existence of something beneath them that was more *you*—more you as I wished to know you—than they were; some trouble in you that I've permitted myself to hate and resent."

She listened all gravely, but without an air of offense, and he felt that while he had been timorously calculating the last consequences of friendship she had quietly enough accepted them.

"You surprise me," she said slowly, and her flush still lingered. "But to refuse to answer you would confirm some impression in you even now much too strong. Any 'trouble'—if you mean any unhappiness—that one can sit comfortably talking about is an unhappiness with distinct limitations. If I were examined before a board of commissioners for testing the felicity of mankind I'm sure I should be pronounced a very fortunate woman." There was something that deeply touched him in her tone, and this quality pierced further as she continued. "But let me add, with all gratitude for your sympathy, that it's my own affair altogether. It needn't disturb you, my dear sir," she wound up with a certain quaintness of gaiety, "for I've often found myself in your company contented enough and diverted enough."

"Well, you're a wonderful woman," the young man declared, "and I admire you as I've never admired anyone. You're wiser than anything I, for one, can say to you; and what I ask of you is not to let me advise or console you, but simply thank you for letting me know you." He had intended no such outburst as this, but his voice rang loud and he felt an unfamiliar joy as he uttered it.

She shook her head with some impatience. "Let us be friends—as I supposed we were going to be—without protestations and fine words. To have you paying compliments to my wisdom—that would be real wretchedness. I can dispense with your admiration better than the Flemish painters can—better than Van Eyck and Rubens, in spite of all their worshipers. Go join your friend—see everything, enjoy everything, learn everything, and write me an excellent letter, brimming over with your impressions. I'm extremely fond of the Dutch painters," she added with the faintest quaver in the world, an impressible break of voice that Longmore had noticed once or twice before and had interpreted as the sudden weariness, the controlled convulsion, of a spirit self-condemned to play a part.

"I don't believe you care a button for the Dutch painters," he said with a laugh. "But I shall certainly write you a letter."

She rose and turned homeward, thoughtfully rearranging her flowers as she walked. Little was said; Longmore was asking

himself with an agitation of his own in the unspoken words whether all this meant simply that he was in love. He looked at the rooks wheeling against the golden-hued sky, between the treetops, but not at his companion, whose personal presence seemed lost in the felicity she had created. Madame de Mauves was silent and grave—she felt she had almost grossly failed and she was proportionately disappointed. An emotional friendship she had not desired; her scheme had been to pass with her visitor as a placid creature with a good deal of leisure which she was disposed to devote to profitable conversation of an impersonal sort. She liked him extremely, she felt in him the living force of something to which, when she made up her girlish mind that a needy nobleman was the ripest fruit of time, she had done too scant justice. They went through the little gate in the garden wall and approached the house. On the terrace Madame Clairin was entertaining a friend—a little elderly gentleman with a white mustache and an order in his buttonhole. Madame de Mauves chose to pass round the house into the court; whereupon her sister-in-law, greeting Longmore with an authoritative nod, lifted her eyeglass and stared at them as they went by. Longmore heard the little old gentleman uttering some old-fashioned epigram about "*la vieille galanterie française*"—then by a sudden impulse he looked at Madame de Mauves and wondered what she was doing in such a world. She stopped before the house, not asking him to come in. "I hope you'll act on my advice and waste no more time at Saint-Germain."

For an instant there rose to his lips some faded compliment about his time not being wasted, but it expired before the simple sincerity of her look. She stood there as gently serious as the angel of disinterestedness, and it seemed to him he should insult her by treating her words as a bait for flattery. "I shall start in a day or two," he answered, "but I won't promise you not to come back."

"I hope not," she said simply. "I expect to be here a long time."

"I shall come and say good-by," he returned—which she appeared to accept with a smile as she went in.

He stood a moment, then walked slowly homeward by the terrace. It seemed to him that to leave her thus, for a gain on which she herself insisted, was to know her better and admire her more. But he was aware of a vague ferment of feeling which her evasion of his question half an hour before had done more to deepen than to allay. In the midst of it suddenly, on the great terrace of the Château, he encountered M. de Mauves, planted there against the parapet and finishing a cigar. The Count, who, he thought he made out, had an air of peculiar affability, offered him his white plump hand. Longmore stopped; he felt a sharp, a sore desire to cry out to him that he had the most precious wife in the world, that he ought to be ashamed of himself not to know it, and that for all his grand assurance he had never looked down into the depths of her eyes. Richard de Mauves, we have seen, considered he had; but there was doubtless now something in this young woman's eyes that had not been there five years before. The two men conversed formally enough, and M. de Mauves threw off a light bright remark or two about his visit to America. His tone was not soothing to Longmore's excited sensibilities. He seemed to have found the country a gigantic joke, and his blandness went but so far as to allow that jokes on that scale are indeed inexhaustible. Longmore was not by habit an aggressive apologist for the seat of his origin, but the Count's easy diagnosis confirmed his worst estimate of French superficiality. He had understood nothing, felt nothing, learned nothing, and his critic, glancing askance at his aristocratic profile, declared that if the chief merit of a long pedigree was to leave one so fatuously stupid he thanked goodness the Longmores had emerged from obscurity in the present century and in the person of an enterprising timber merchant. M. de Mauves dwelt, of course, on that prime oddity of the American order—the liberty allowed the fairer half of the unmarried young, and confessed to some personal study of the "occasions" it offered to the speculative visitor; a line of research in which, during a fortnight's stay, he had clearly spent his most agreeable hours. "I'm bound to admit," he said, "that in every case I was disarmed by the ex-

treme candor of the young lady, and that they took care of themselves to better purpose than I have seen some mammas in France take care of them." Longmore greeted this handsome concession with the grimmest of smiles and damned his impertinent patronage.

Mentioning, however, at last that he was about to leave Saint-Germain, he was surprised, without exactly being flattered, by his interlocutor's quickened attention. "I'm so very sorry; I hoped we had you for the whole summer." Longmore murmured something civil and wondered why M. de Mauves should care whether he stayed or went. "You've been a real resource to Madame de Mauves," the Count added; "I assure you I've mentally blessed your visits."

"They were a great pleasure to me," Longmore said gravely. "Some day I expect to come back."

"Pray do"—and the Count made a great and friendly point of it. "You see the confidence I have in you." Longmore said nothing and M. de Mauves puffed his cigar reflectively and watched the smoke. "Madame de Mauves," he said at last, "is a rather singular person." And then while our young man shifted his position and wondered whether he was going to "explain" Madame de Mauves, "Being, as you are, her fellow countryman," this lady's husband pursued, "I don't mind speaking frankly. She's a little overstrained; the most charming woman in the world, as you see, but a little *volontaire* and morbid. Now you see she has taken this extraordinary fancy for solitude. I can't get her to go anywhere, to see anyone. When my friends present themselves she's perfectly polite, but it cures them of coming again. She doesn't do herself justice, and I expect every day to hear two or three of them say to me, 'Your wife's *jolie à croquer*: what a pity she hasn't a little *esprit*.' You must have found out that she has really a great deal. But, to tell the whole truth, what she needs is to forget herself. She sits alone for hours poring over her English books and looking at life through that terrible brown fog they seem to me—don't they?—to fling over the world. I doubt if your English authors," the Count went on with a serenity which Longmore afterwards char-

acterized as sublime, "are very sound reading for young married women. I don't pretend to know much about them; but I remember that not long after our marriage Madame de Mauves undertook to read me one day some passages from a certain Wordsworth—a poet highly esteemed, it appears, *chez vous*. It was as if she had taken me by the nape of the neck and held my head for half an hour over a basin of *soupe aux choux*: I felt as if we ought to ventilate the drawing room before anyone called. But I suppose you know him—*ce génie-là*. Every nation has its own ideals of every kind, but when I remember some of *our* charming writers! I think at all events my wife never forgave me and that it was a real shock to her to find she had married a man who had very much the same taste in literature as in cookery. But you're a man of general culture, a man of the world," said M. de Mauves, turning to Longmore but looking hard at the seal of his watchguard. "You can talk about everything, and I'm sure you like Alfred de Musset as well as Monsieur Wordsworth. Talk to her about everything you can, Alfred de Musset included. Bah! I forgot you're going. Come back then as soon as possible and report on your travels. If my wife too would make a little voyage, it would do her great good. It would enlarge her horizon"—and M. de Mauves made a series of short nervous jerks with his stick in the air—"it would wake up her imagination. She's too much of one piece, you know—it would show her how much one may bend without breaking." He paused a moment and gave two or three vigorous puffs. Then turning to his companion again with eyebrows expressively raised: "I hope you admire my candor. I beg you to believe I wouldn't say such things to one of *us*!"

Evening was at hand and the lingering light seemed to charge the air with faintly golden motes. Longmore stood gazing at these luminous particles; he could almost have fancied them a swarm of humming insects, the chorus of a refrain: "She has a great deal of *esprit*—she has a great deal of *esprit*." "Yes, she has a great deal," he said mechanically, turning to the Count. M. de Mauves glanced at him sharply, as if to ask what the deuce he was talking about. "She has a great deal of intelligence," said

Longmore quietly, "a great deal of beauty, a great many virtues."

M. de Mauves busied himself for a moment in lighting another cigar, and when he had finished, with a return of his confidential smile, "I suspect you of thinking that I don't do my wife justice," he made answer. "Take care—take care, young man; that's a dangerous assumption. In general a man always does his wife justice. More than justice," the Count laughed—"that we keep for the wives of other men!"

Longmore afterwards remembered in favor of his friend's fine manner that he had not measured at this moment the dusky abyss over which it hovered. But a deepening subterranean echo, loudest at the last, lingered on his spiritual ear. For the present his keenest sensation was a desire to get away and cry aloud that M. de Mauves was no better than a pompous dunce. He bade him an abrupt good night, which was to serve also, he said, as good-by.

"Decidedly then you go?" It was spoken almost with the note of irritation.

"Decidedly."

"But of course you'll come and take leave——?" His manner implied that the omission would be uncivil, but there seemed to Longmore himself something so ludicrous in his taking a lesson in consideration from M. de Mauves that he put the appeal by with a laugh. The Count frowned as if it were a new and unpleasant sensation for him to be left at a loss. "Ah, you people have your *façons*!" he murmured as Longmore turned away, not foreseeing that he should learn still more about his *façons* before he had done with him.

Longmore sat down to dinner at his hotel with his usual good intentions, but in the act of lifting his first glass of wine to his lips he suddenly fell to musing and set down the liquor untasted. This mood lasted long, and when he emerged from it his fish was cold; but that mattered little, for his appetite was gone. That evening he packed his trunk with an indignant energy. This was so effective that the operation was accomplished before bedtime, and as he was not in the least sleepy he devoted the

interval to writing two letters, one of them a short note to Madame de Mauves, which he entrusted to a servant for delivery the next morning. He had found it best, he said, to leave Saint-Germain immediately, but he expected to return to Paris early in the autumn. The other letter was the result of his having remembered a day or two before that he had not yet complied with Mrs. Draper's injunction to give her an account of his impression of her friend. The present occasion seemed propitious, and he wrote half-a-dozen pages. His tone, however, was grave, and Mrs. Draper, on reading him over, was slightly disappointed—she would have preferred he should have “raved” a little more. But what chiefly concerns us is the concluding passage.

“The only time she ever spoke to me of her marriage,” he wrote, “she intimated that it had been a perfect love match. With all abatements, I suppose, this is what most marriages take themselves to be; but it would mean in her case, I think, more than in that of most women, for her love was an absolute idealization. She believed her husband to be a hero of rose-colored romance, and he turns out to be not even a hero of very sad-colored reality. For some time now she has been sounding her mistake, but I don't believe she has yet touched the bottom. She strikes me as a person who's begging off from full knowledge—who has patched up a peace with some painful truth and is trying a while the experiment of living with closed eyes. In the dark she tries to see again the gilding on her idol. Illusion, of course, is illusion, and one must always pay for it; but there's something truly tragical in seeing an earthly penalty levied on such divine folly as this. As for M. de Mauves he's a shallow Frenchman to his fingers' ends, and I confess I should dislike him for this if he were a much better man. He can't forgive his wife for having married him too extravagantly and loved him too well; since he feels, I suppose, in some uncorrupted corner of his being that as she originally saw him so he ought to have been. It disagrees with him somewhere that a little American bourgeoisie should have fancied him a finer fellow than he is or than he at all wants to be. He hasn't a glimmering of real acquaintance with his wife; he can't understand the stream

of passion flowing so clear and still. To tell the truth I hardly understand it myself, but when I see the sight I find I greatly admire it. The Count at any rate would have enjoyed the comfort of believing his wife as bad a case as himself, and you'll hardly believe me when I assure you he goes about intimating to gentlemen whom he thinks it may concern that it would be a convenience to him they should make love to Madame de Mauves."

v

On reaching Paris Longmore straightway purchased a Murray's *Belgium*, to help himself to believe that he would start on the morrow for Brussels; but when the morrow came it occurred to him that he ought by way of preparation to acquaint himself more intimately with the Flemish painters in the Louvre. This took a whole morning, but it did little to hasten his departure. He had abruptly left Saint-Germain because it seemed to him that respect for Madame de Mauves required he should bequeath her husband no reason to suppose he had, as it were, taken a low hint; but now that he had deferred to that scruple he found himself thinking more and more ardently of his friend. It was a poor expression of ardor to be lingering irresolutely on the forsaken boulevard, but he detested the idea of leaving Saint-Germain five hundred miles behind him. He felt very foolish, nevertheless, and wandered about nervously, promising himself to take the next train. A dozen trains started, however, and he was still in Paris. This inward ache was more than he had bargained for, and as he looked at the shopwindows he wondered if it represented a "passion." He had never been fond of the word and had grown up with much mistrust of what it stood for. He had hoped that when he should fall "really" in love he should do it with an excellent conscience, with plenty of confidence and joy, doubtless, but no strange soreness, no pangs nor regrets. Here was a sentiment concocted of pity and anger as well as of admiration, and bristling with scruples and doubts and fears. He had come abroad to enjoy the Flemish painters and all others, but what fair-tressed saint of Van Eyck or Mem-

ling was so interesting a figure as the lonely lady of Saint-Germain? His restless steps carried him at last out of the long villa-bordered avenue which leads to the Bois de Boulogne.

Summer had fairly begun and the drive beside the lake was empty, but there were various loungers on the benches and chairs, and the great café had an air of animation. Longmore's walk had given him an appetite, and he went into the establishment and demanded a dinner, remarking for the hundredth time, as he admired the smart little tables disposed in the open air, how much better (than anywhere else) they ordered this matter in France.

"Will monsieur dine in the garden or in the salon?" the waiter blandly asked. Longmore chose the garden and, observing that a great cluster of June roses was trained over the wall of the house, placed himself at a table near by, where the best of dinners was served him on the whitest of linen and in the most shining of porcelain. It so happened that his table was near a window and that as he sat he could look into a corner of the salon. So it was that his attention rested on a lady seated just within the window, which was open, face to face apparently with a companion who was concealed by the curtain. She was a very pretty woman, and Longmore looked at her as often as was consistent with good manners. After a while he even began to wonder who she was, and finally to suspect that she was one of those ladies whom it is no breach of good manners to look at as often as you like. Our young man, too, if he had been so disposed, would have been the more free to give her all his attention that her own was fixed upon the person facing her. She was what the French call a *belle brune*, and though Longmore, who had rather a conservative taste in such matters, was but half-charmed by her bold outlines and even braver complexion, he couldn't help admiring her expression of basking contentment.

She was evidently very happy, and her happiness gave her an air of innocence. The talk of her friend, whoever he was, abundantly suited her humor, for she sat listening to him with a broad, idle smile and interrupting him fitfully, while she

crunched her bonbons, with a murmured response, presumably as broad, which appeared to have the effect of launching him again. She drank a great deal of champagne and ate an immense number of strawberries, and was plainly altogether a person with an impartial relish for strawberries, champagne, and what she doubtless would have called *bêtises*.

They had half finished dinner when Longmore sat down, and he was still in his place when they rose. She had hung her bonnet on a nail above her chair, and her companion passed round the table to take it down for her. As he did so she bent her head to look at a wine stain on her dress, and in the movement exposed the greater part of the back of a very handsome neck. The gentleman observed it, and observed also, apparently, that the room beyond them was empty; that he stood within eyeshot of Longmore he failed to observe. He stooped suddenly and imprinted a gallant kiss on the fair expanse. In the author of this tribute Longmore then recognized Richard de Mauves. The lady to whom it had been rendered put on her bonnet, using his flushed smile as a mirror, and in a moment they passed through the garden on their way to their carriage. Then for the first time M. de Mauves became aware of his wife's young friend. He measured with a rapid glance this spectator's relation to the open window and checked himself in the impulse to stop and speak to him. He contented himself with bowing all imperiously as he opened the gate for his companion.

That evening Longmore made a railway journey, but not to Brussels. He had effectually ceased to care for Brussels; all he cared for in the world now was Madame de Mauves. The air of his mind had had a sudden clearing-up; pity and anger were still throbbing there, but they had space to range at their pleasure, for doubts and scruples had abruptly departed. It was little, he felt, that he could interpose between her resignation and the indignity of her position; but that little, if it involved the sacrifice of everything that bound him to the tranquil past, he could offer her with a rapture which at last made stiff resistance a terribly inferior substitute for faith. Nothing in his tranquil past had given such a zest to consciousness as this

happy sense of choosing to go straight back to Saint-Germain. How to justify his return, how to explain his ardor, troubled him little. He wasn't even sure he wished to be understood; he wished only to show how little by any fault of his Madame de Mauves was alone so with the harshness of fate. He was conscious of no distinct desire to "make love" to her; if he could have uttered the essence of his longing he would have said that he wished her to remember that in a world colored gray to her vision by the sense of her mistake there was one vividly honest man. She might certainly have remembered it, however, without his coming back to remind her; and it is not to be denied that as he waited for the morrow he longed immensely for the sound of her voice.

He waited the next day till his usual hour of calling—the late afternoon; but he learned at the door that the mistress of the house was not at home. The servant offered the information that she was walking a little way in the forest. Longmore went through the garden and out of the small door into the lane, and, after half an hour's vain exploration, saw her coming toward him at the end of a green by-path. As he appeared she stopped a moment, as if to turn aside; then recognizing him she slowly advanced and had presently taken the hand he held out.

"Nothing has happened," she said with her beautiful eyes on him. "You're not ill?"

"Nothing except that when I got to Paris I found how fond I had grown of Saint-Germain."

She neither smiled nor looked flattered; it seemed indeed to Longmore that she took his reappearance with no pleasure. But he was uncertain, for he immediately noted that in his absence the whole character of her face had changed. It showed him something momentous had happened. It was no longer self-contained melancholy that he read in her eyes, but grief and agitation which had lately struggled with the passionate love of peace ruling her before all things else, and forced her to know that deep experience is never peaceful. She was pale and had evidently been shedding tears. He felt his heart beat hard—he seemed now to touch her secret. She continued to look at

him with a clouded brow, as if his return had surrounded her with complications too great to be disguised by a colorless welcome. For some moments, as he turned and walked beside her, neither spoke; then abruptly, "Tell me truly, Mr. Longmore," she said, "why you've come back."

He inclined himself to her, almost pulling up again, with an air that startled her into a certainty of what she had feared. "Because I've learned the real answer to the question I asked you the other day. You're not happy—you're too good to be happy on the terms offered you. Madame de Mauves," he went on with a gesture which protested against a gesture of her own, "I can't be happy, you know, when you're as little so as I make you out. I don't care for anything so long as I only feel helpless and sore about you. I found during those dreary days in Paris that the thing in life I most care for is this daily privilege of seeing you. I know it's very brutal to tell you I admire you; it's an insult to you to treat you as if you had complained to me or appealed to me. But such a friendship as I waked up to there"—and he tossed his head toward the distant city—"is a potent force, I assure you. When forces are stupidly stifled they explode. However," he went on, "if you had told me every trouble in your heart it would have mattered little; I couldn't say more than I *must* say now—that if that in life from which you've hoped most has given you least, this devoted respect of mine will refuse no service and betray no trust."

She had begun to make marks in the earth with the point of her parasol, but she stopped and listened to him in perfect immobility—immobility save for the appearance by the time he had stopped speaking of a flush in her guarded clearness. Such as it was it told Longmore she was moved, and his first perceiving it was the happiest moment of his life. She raised her eyes at last, and they uttered a plea for noninsistence that unspeakably touched him.

"Thank you—thank you!" she said calmly enough; but the next moment her own emotion baffled this pretense, a convulsion shook her for ten seconds and she burst into tears. Her tears vanished as quickly as they came, but they **did** Longmore a

world of good. He had always felt indefinitely afraid of her; her being had somehow seemed fed by a deeper faith and a stronger will than his own; but her half-dozen smothered sobs showed him the bottom of her heart and convinced him she was weak enough to be grateful. "Excuse me," she said; "I'm too nervous to listen to you. I believe I could have dealt with an enemy today, but I can't bear up under a friend."

"You're killing yourself with stoicism—that's what is the matter with you!" he cried. "Listen to a friend for his own sake if not for yours. I've never presumed to offer you an atom of compassion, and you can't accuse yourself of an abuse of charity."

She looked about her as under the constraint of this appeal, but it promised him a reluctant attention. Noting, however, by the wayside the fallen log on which they had rested a few evenings before, she went and sat down on it with a resigned grace while the young man, silent before her and watching her, took from her the mute assurance that if she was charitable now he must at least be very wise.

"Something came to my knowledge yesterday," he said as he sat down beside her, "which gave me an intense impression of your loneliness. You're truth itself, and there's no truth about you. You believe in purity and duty and dignity, and you live in a world in which they're daily belied. I ask myself with vain rage how you ever came into such a world, and why the perversity of fate never let me know you before."

She waited a little; she looked down, straight before her. "I like my 'world' no better than you do, and it was not for its own sake I came into it. But what particular group of people is worth pinning one's faith upon? I confess it sometimes seems to me men and women are very poor creatures. I suppose I'm too romantic and always was. I've an unfortunate taste for poetic fitness. Life's hard prose, and one must learn to read prose contentedly. I believe I once supposed all the prose to be in America, which was very foolish. What I thought, what I believed, what I expected, when I was an ignorant girl fatally addicted to falling in love with my own theories, is more than

I can begin to tell you now. Sometimes when I remember certain impulses, certain illusions of those days, they take away my breath, and I wonder that my false point of view hasn't led me into troubles greater than any I've now to lament. I had a conviction which you'd probably smile at if I were to attempt to express it to you. It was a singular form for passionate faith to take, but it had all of the sweetness and the ardor of passionate faith. It led me to take a great step, and it lies behind me now, far off, a vague deceptive form melting in the light of experience. It has faded, but it hasn't vanished. Some feelings, I'm sure, die only with ourselves; some illusions are as much the condition of our life as our heartbeats. They say that life itself is an illusion—that this world is a shadow of which the reality is yet to come. Life is all of a piece then, and there's no shame in being miserably human. As for my loneliness, it doesn't greatly matter; it is the fault in part of my obstinacy. There have been times when I've been frantically distressed and, to tell you the truth, wretchedly homesick, because my maid—a jewel of a maid—lied to me with every second breath. There have been moments when I've wished I was the daughter of a poor New England minister—living in a little white house under a couple of elms and doing all the housework."

She had begun to speak slowly, with reserve and effort; but she went on quickly and as if talk were at last a relief. "My marriage introduced me to people and things which seemed to me at first very strange and then very horrible, and then, to tell the truth, of very little importance. At first I expended a great deal of sorrow and dismay and pity on it all; but there soon came a time when I began to wonder if it were worth one's tears. If I could tell you the eternal friendships I've seen broken, the inconsolable woes consoled, the jealousies and vanities scrambling to outdo each other, you'd agree with me that tempers like yours and mine can understand neither such troubles nor such compensations. A year ago, while I was in the country, a friend of mine was in despair at the infidelity of her husband; she wrote me a most dolorous letter, and on my return to Paris I went immediately to see her. A week had elapsed, and as I had

seen stranger things I thought she might have recovered her spirits. Not at all; she was still in despair—but at what? At the conduct, the abandoned shameless conduct of—well, of a lady I'll call Madame de T. You'll imagine, of course, that Madame de T. was the lady whom my friend's husband preferred to his wife. Far from it; he had never seen her. Who, then, was Madame de T.? Madame de T. was cruelly devoted to M. de V. And who was M. de V.? M. de V. was—well, in two words again, my friend was cultivating two jealousies at once. I hardly know what I said to her; something at any rate that she found unpardonable, for she quite gave me up. Shortly afterwards my husband proposed we should cease to live in Paris, and I gladly assented, for I believe I had taken a turn of spirits that made me a detestable companion. I should have preferred to go quite into the country, into Auvergne, where my husband has a house. But to him Paris in some degree is necessary, and Saint-Germain has been a conscious compromise."

"A conscious compromise!" Longmore expressively repeated. "That's your whole life."

"It's the life of many people," she made prompt answer—"of most people of quiet tastes, and it's certainly better than acute distress. One's at a loss theoretically to defend compromises; but if I found a poor creature who had managed to arrive at one I should think myself not urgently called to expose its weak side." But she had no sooner uttered these words than she laughed all amicably, as if to mitigate their too personal application.

"Heaven forbid one should do that unless one has something better to offer," Longmore returned. "And yet I'm haunted by the dream of a life in which you should have found no compromises, for they're a perversion of natures that tend only to goodness and rectitude. As I see it, you should have found happiness serene, profound, complete; a *femme de chambre* not a jewel perhaps, but warranted to tell but one fib a day; a society possibly rather provincial, but—in spite of your poor opinion of mankind—a good deal of solid virtue; jealousies and vanities very tame, and no particular iniquities and adulteries. A

husband," he added after a moment—"a husband of your own faith and race and spiritual substance, who would have loved you well."

She rose to her feet, shaking her head. "You're very kind to go to the expense of such dazzling visions for me. Visions are vain things; we must make the best of the reality we happen to be in for."

"And yet," said Longmore, provoked by what seemed the very wantonness of her patience, "the reality *you* 'happen to be in for' has, if I'm not in error, very recently taken a shape that keenly tests your philosophy."

She seemed on the point of replying that his sympathy was too zealous; but a couple of impatient tears in his eyes proved it founded on a devotion of which she mightn't make light. "Ah, philosophy?" she echoed. "I *have* none. Thank heaven," she cried with vehemence, "I have none! I believe, Mr. Longmore," she added in a moment, "that I've nothing on earth but a conscience—it's a good time to tell you so—nothing but a dogged, obstinate, clinging conscience. Does that prove me to be indeed of your faith and race, and have you one yourself for which you can say as much? I don't speak in vanity, for I believe that if my conscience may prevent me from doing anything very base it will effectually prevent me also from doing anything very fine."

"I'm delighted to hear it," her friend returned with high emphasis—"that proves we're made for each other. It's very certain I too shall never cut a great romantic figure. And yet I've fancied that in my case the unaccommodating organ we speak of might be blinded and gagged a while, in a really good cause, if not turned out of doors. In yours," he went on with the same appealing irony, "is it absolutely beyond being 'squared'?"

But she made no concession to his tone. "Don't laugh at your conscience," she answered gravely; "that's the only blasphemy I know."

She had hardly spoken when she turned suddenly at an unexpected sound, and at the same moment he heard a footstep in an

adjacent by-path which crossed their own at a short distance from where they stood.

"It's M. de Mauves," she said at once; with which she moved slowly forward. Longmore, wondering how she knew without seeing, had overtaken her by the time her husband came into view. A solitary walk in the forest was a pastime to which M. de Mauves was not addicted, but he seemed on this occasion to have resorted to it with some equanimity. He was smoking a fragrant cigar and had thrust his thumb into the armhole of his waistcoat with the air of a man thinking at his ease. He stopped short with surprise on seeing his wife and her companion, and his surprise had for Longmore even the pitch of impertinence. He glanced rapidly from one to the other, fixed the young man's own look sharply a single instant, and then lifted his hat with formal politeness.

"I was not aware," he said, turning to Madame de Mauves, "that I might congratulate you on the return of monsieur."

"You should at once have known it," she immediately answered, "if I had expected such a pleasure."

She had turned very pale, and Longmore felt this to be a first meeting after some commotion. "My return was unexpected to myself," he said to her husband. "I came back last night."

M. de Mauves seemed to express such satisfaction as could consort with a limited interest. "It's needless for me to make you welcome. Madame de Mauves knows the duties of hospitality." And with another bow he continued his walk.

She pursued her homeward course with her friend, neither of them pretending much not to consent to appear silent. The Count's few moments with them had both chilled Longmore and angered him, casting a shadow across a prospect which had somehow, just before, begun to open and almost to brighten. He watched his companion narrowly as they went, and wondered what she had last had to suffer. Her husband's presence had checked her disposition to talk, though nothing betrayed she had recognized his making a point at her expense. Yet if matters were none the less plainly at a crisis between them he

could but wonder vainly what it was on her part that prevented some practical protest or some rupture. What did she suspect?—how much did she know? To what was she resigned?—how much had she forgiven? How, above all, did she reconcile with knowledge, or with suspicion, that intense consideration she had just now all but assured him she entertained? “She has loved him once,” Longmore said with a sinking of the heart, “and with her to love once is to commit herself forever. Her clever husband thinks her too prim. What would a stupid poet call it?” He relapsed with aching impotence into the sense of her being somehow beyond him, unattainable, immeasurable by his own fretful logic. Suddenly he gave three passionate switches in the air with his cane which made Madame de Mauves look round. She could hardly have guessed their signifying that where ambition was so vain the next best thing to it was the very ardor of hopelessness.

She found in her drawing room the little elderly Frenchman, M. de Chalumeau, whom Longmore had observed a few days before on the terrace. On this occasion, too, Madame Clairin was entertaining him, but as her sister-in-law came in she surrendered her post and addressed herself to our hero. Longmore, at thirty, was still an ingenuous youth, and there was something in this lady’s large, assured attack that fairly intimidated him. He was doubtless not as reassured as he ought to have been at finding he had not absolutely forfeited her favor by his want of resource during their last interview, and a suspicion of her being prepared to approach him on another line completed his distress.

“So you’ve returned from Brussels by way of the forest?” she archly asked.

“I’ve not been to Brussels. I returned yesterday from Paris by the only way—by the train.”

Madame Clairin was infinitely struck. “I’ve never known a person at all *expérimentée* to be so fond of Saint-Germain. They generally declare it’s horribly dull.”

“That’s not very polite to you,” said Longmore, vexed at his lack of superior form and determined not to be abashed.

"Ah, what have I to do with it?" Madame Clairin brightly wailed. "I'm the dullest thing here. They've not had, other gentlemen, your success with my sister-in-law."

"It would have been very easy to have it. Madame de Mauves is kindness itself."

She swung open her great fan. "To her own countrymen!"

Longmore remained silent; he hated the tone of this conversation. The speaker looked at him a little and then took in their hostess, to whom M. de Chalumeau was serving up another epigram, which the charming creature received with a droop of the head and eyes that strayed through the window. "Don't pretend to tell me," Madame Clairin suddenly exhaled, "that you're not in love with that pretty woman."

"*Allons donc!*" cried Longmore in the most inspired French he had ever uttered. He rose the next minute and took a hasty farewell.

VI

He allowed several days to pass without going back; it was of a sublime suitability to appear not to regard his friend's frankness during their last interview as a general invitation. The sacrifice cost him a great effort, for hopeless passions are exactly not the most patient; and he had, moreover, a constant fear that if, as he believed, deep within the circle round which he could only hover, the hour of supreme explanations had come, the magic of her magnanimity might convert M. de Mauves. Vicious men, it was abundantly recorded, had been so converted as to be acceptable to God, and the something divine in this lady's composition would sanctify any means she should choose to employ. Her means, he kept repeating, were no business of his, and the essence of his admiration ought to be to allow her to do as she liked; but he felt as if he should turn away into a world out of which most of the joy had departed if she should like, after all, to see nothing more in his interest in her than might be repaid by mere current social coin.

When at last he went back, he found to his vexation that he was to run the gauntlet of Madame Clairin's officious hospitality.

It was one of the first mornings of perfect summer, and the drawing room, through the open windows, was flooded with such a confusion of odors and bird notes as might warrant the hope that Madame de Mauves would renew with him for an hour or two the exploration of the forest. Her sister-in-law, however, whose hair was not yet dressed, emerged like a brassy discord in a maze of melody. At the same moment the servant returned with his mistress's regrets; she begged to be excused, she was indisposed and unable to see Mr. Longmore. The young man knew just how disappointed he looked and just what Madame Clairin thought of it, and this consciousness determined in him an attitude of almost aggressive frigidity. This was apparently what she desired. She wished to throw him off his balance and, if she was not mistaken, knew exactly how.

"Put down your hat, Mr. Longmore," she said, "and be polite for once. You were not at all polite the other day when I asked you that friendly question about the state of your heart."

"I *have* no heart—to talk about," he returned with as little grace.

"As well say you've none at all. I advise you to cultivate a little eloquence; you may have use for it. That was not an idle question of mine; I don't ask idle questions. For a couple of months now that you've been coming and going among us it seems to me you've had very few to answer of any sort."

"I've certainly been very well treated," he still dryly allowed.

His companion waited ever so little to bring out: "Have you never felt disposed to ask any?"

Her look, her tone, were so charged with insidious meanings as to make him feel that even to understand her would savor of dishonest complicity. "What is it you have to tell me?" he cried with a flushed frown.

Her own color rose at the question. It's rather hard, when you come bearing yourself very much as the sibyl when she came to the Roman king, to be treated as something worse than a vulgar gossip. "I might tell you, monsieur," she returned, "that you've as bad a *ton* as any young man I ever met. Where have you lived—what are your ideas? A stupid one of my

own—possibly!—has been to call your attention to a fact that it takes some delicacy to touch upon. You’ve noticed, I suppose, that my sister-in-law isn’t the happiest woman in the world.”

“Oh!”—Longmore made short work of it.

She seemed to measure his intelligence a little uncertainly. “You’ve formed, I suppose,” she nevertheless continued, “your conception of the grounds of her discontent?”

“It hasn’t required much forming. The ground—or at least a specimen or two of them—have simply stared me in the face.”

Madame Clairin considered a moment with her eyes on him. “Yes—*ces choses-là se voient*. My brother, in a single word, has the deplorable habit of falling in love with other women. I don’t judge him; I don’t judge my sister-in-law. I only permit myself to say that in her position I would have managed otherwise. I’d either have kept my husband’s affection or I’d have frankly done without it. But my sister’s an odd compound; I don’t profess to understand her. Therefore it is, in a measure, that I appeal to you, her fellow countryman. Of course you’ll be surprised at my way of looking at the matter, and I admit that it’s a way in use only among people whose history—that of a race—has cultivated in them the sense for high political solutions.” She paused and Longmore wondered where the history of her race was going to lead her. But she clearly saw her course. “There has never been a *galant homme* among us, I fear, who has not given his wife, even when she was very charming, the right to be jealous. We know our history for ages back, and the fact’s established. It’s not a very edifying one if you like, but it’s something to have scandals with pedigrees—if you can’t have them with attenuations. Our men have been Frenchmen of France, and their wives—I may say it—have been of no meaner blood. You may see all their portraits at our poor charming old house—every one of them an ‘injured’ beauty, but not one of them hanging her head. Not one of them ever had the bad taste to be jealous, and yet not one in a dozen ever consented to an indiscretion—allowed herself, I mean, to be talked about. *Voilà comme elles ont su s’arranger*. How they did it—go and look at the dusky faded canvases and pastels and

ask. They were dear brave women of wit. When they had a headache they put on a little rouge and came to supper as usual, and when they had a heartache they touched up that quarter with just such another brush. These are great traditions and charming precedents, I hold, and it doesn't seem to me fair that a little American bourgeoisie should come in and pretend to alter them—all to hang her modern photograph and her obstinate little *air penché* in the gallery of our shrewd great-grandmothers. She should fall into line, she should keep up the tone. When she married my brother I don't suppose she took him for a member of a *société de bonnes œuvres*. I don't say we're right; who *is* right? But we are as history has made us, and if anyone's to change it had better be our charming, but not accommodating, friend." Again Madame Clairin paused, again she opened and closed her great modern fan, which clattered like the screen of a shopwindow. "Let her keep up the tone!" she prodigiously repeated.

Longmore felt himself gape, but he gasped an "Ah!" to cover it.

Madame Clairin's dip into the family annals had apparently imparted an honest zeal to her indignation. "For a long time," she continued, "my *belle-sœur* has been taking the attitude of an injured woman, affecting a disgust with the world and shutting herself up to read free-thinking books. I've never permitted myself, you may believe, the least observation on her conduct, but I can't accept it as the last word either of taste or of tact. When a woman with her prettiness lets her husband stray away she deserves no small part of her fate. I don't wish you to agree with me—on the contrary; but I call such a woman a pure noodle. She must have bored him to death. What has passed between them for many months needn't concern us; what provocation my sister has had—monstrous, if you wish—what ennui my brother has suffered. It's enough that a week ago, just after you had ostensibly gone to Brussels, something happened to produce an explosion. She found a letter in his pocket, a photograph, a trinket, *que sais-je?* At any rate there was a grand scene. I didn't listen at the keyhole, and I don't know

what was said; but I've reason to believe that my poor brother was hauled over the coals as I fancy none of his ancestors have ever been—even by angry ladies who weren't their wives."

Longmore had leaned forward in silent attention with his elbows on his knees, and now, impulsively, he dropped his face into his hands. "Ah, poor, poor woman!"

"*Voilà!*" said Madame Clairin. "You pity her."

"Pity her?" cried Longmore, looking up with ardent eyes and forgetting the spirit of the story to which he had been treated in the miserable facts. "Don't you?"

"A little. But I'm not acting sentimentally—I'm acting scientifically. We've always been capable of ideas. I want to arrange things; to see my brother free to do as he chooses; to see his wife contented. Do you understand me?"

"Very well, I think," the young man said. "You're the most immoral person I've lately had the privilege of conversing with."

Madame Clairin took it calmly. "Possibly. When was ever a great peacemaker not immoral?"

"Ah, no," Longmore protested. "You're too superficial to be a great peacemaker. You don't begin to know anything about Madame de Mauves."

She inclined her head to one side while her fine eyes kept her visitor in view; she mused a moment and then smiled as with a certain compassionate patience. "It's not in my interest to contradict you."

"It would be in your interest to learn, madam," he resolutely returned, "what honest men most admire in a woman—and to recognize it when you see it."

She was wonderful—she waited a moment. "So you *are* in love!" she then effectively brought out.

For a moment he thought of getting up, but he decided to stay. "I wonder if you'd understand me," he said at last, "if I were to tell you that I have for Madame de Mauves the most devoted and most respectful friendship?"

"You underrate my intelligence. But in that case you ought to exert your influence to put an end to these painful domestic scenes."

"Do you imagine she talks to me about her domestic scenes?" Longmore cried.

His companion stared. "Then your friendship isn't returned?" And as he but ambiguously threw up his hands, "Now, at least," she added, "she'll have something to tell you. I happen to know the upshot of my brother's last interview with his wife." Longmore rose to his feet as a protest against the indelicacy of the position into which he had been drawn; but all that made him tender made him curious, and she caught in his averted eyes an expression that prompted her to strike her blow. "My brother's absurdly entangled with a certain person in Paris; of course he ought not to be, but he wouldn't be my brother if he weren't. It was this irregular passion that dictated his words. 'Listen to me, madam,' he cried at last; 'let us live like people who understand life! It's unpleasant to be forced to say such things outright, but you've a way of bringing one down to the rudiments. I'm faithless, I'm heartless, I'm brutal, I'm everything horrible—it's understood. Take your revenge, console yourself: you're too charming a woman to have anything to complain of. Here's a handsome young man sighing himself into a consumption for you. Listen to your poor compatriot and you'll find that virtue's none the less becoming for being good-natured. You'll see that it's not after all such a doleful world and that there's even an advantage in having the most impudent of husbands.'" Madame Clairin paused; Longmore had turned very pale. "You may believe it," she amazingly pursued; "the speech took place in my presence; things were done in order. And now, monsieur"—this with a wondrous strained grimace which he was too troubled at the moment to appreciate, but which he remembered later with a kind of awe—"we count on you!"

"Her husband said this to her face to face, as you say it to me now?" he asked after a silence.

"Word for word and with the most perfect politeness."

"And Madame de Mauves—what did she say?"

Madame Clairin smiled again. "To such a speech as that a woman says—nothing. She had been sitting with a piece of

needlework, and I think she hadn't seen Richard since their quarrel the day before. He came in with the gravity of an ambassador, and I'm sure that when he made his *demande en mariage* his manner wasn't more respectful. He only wanted white gloves!" said Longmore's friend. "My *belle-sœur* sat silent a few moments, drawing her stitches, and then without a word, without a glance, walked out of the room. It was just what she *should* have done!"

"Yes," the young man repeated, "it was just what she should have done."

"And I, left alone with my brother, do you know what I said?"

Longmore shook his head. "*Mauvais sujet!*" he suggested.

"'You've done me the honor,' I said, 'to take this step in my presence. I don't pretend to qualify it. You know what you're about, and it's your own affair. But you may confide in my discretion.' Do you think he has had reason to complain of it?" She received no answer; her visitor had slowly averted himself; he passed his gloves mechanically round the band of his hat. "I hope," she cried, "you're not going to start for Brussels!"

Plainly he was much disturbed, and Madame Clairin might congratulate herself on the success of her plea for old-fashioned manners. And yet there was something that left her more puzzled than satisfied in the colorless tone with which he answered, "No, I shall remain here for the present." The processes of his mind were unsociably private, and she could have fancied for a moment that he was linked with their difficult friend in some monstrous conspiracy of asceticism.

"Côme this evening," she nevertheless bravely resumed. "The rest will take care of itself. Meanwhile I shall take the liberty of telling my sister-in-law that I've repeated—in short, that I've put you *au fait*."

He had a start but he controlled himself, speaking quietly enough. "Tell her what you please. Nothing you can tell her will affect her conduct."

"*Voyons!* Do you mean to tell me that a woman young, pretty, sentimental, neglected, wronged if you will——? I see

you don't believe it. Believe simply in your own opportunity!" she went on. "But for heaven's sake, if it is to lead anywhere, don't come back with that *visage de croquemort*. You look as if you were going to bury your heart—not to offer it to a pretty woman. You're much better when you smile—you're very nice then. Come, do yourself justice."

He remained a moment face to face with her, but his expression didn't change. "I shall do myself justice," he however after an instant made answer; and abruptly, with a bow, he took his departure.

VII

He felt, when he found himself unobserved and outside, that he must plunge into violent action, walk fast and far and defer the opportunity for thought. He strode away into the forest, swinging his cane, throwing back his head, casting his eyes into verdurous vistas and following the road without a purpose. He felt immensely excited, but could have given no straight name to his agitation. It was a joy as all increase of freedom is joyous; something seemed to have been cleared out of his path and his destiny to have rounded a cape and brought him into sight of an open sea. But it was a pain in the degree in which his freedom somehow resolved itself into the need of despising all mankind with a single exception; and the fact that Madame de Mauves inhabited a planet contaminated by the presence of the baser multitude kept elation from seeming a pledge of ideal bliss.

There she was, at any rate, and circumstances now forced them to be intimate. She had ceased to have what men call a secret for him, and this fact itself brought with it a sort of rapture. He had no prevision that he should "profit," in the vulgar sense, by the extraordinary position into which they had been thrown; it might be but a cruel trick of destiny to make hope a harsher mockery and renunciation a keener suffering. But above all this rose the conviction that she could do nothing that wouldn't quicken his attachment. It was this conviction that gross accident—all odious in itself—would force the beauty of her character into more perfect relief for him that made him

stride along as if he were celebrating a spiritual feast. He rambled at hazard for a couple of hours, finding at last that he had left the forest behind him and had wandered into an unfamiliar region. It was a perfectly rural scene, and the still summer day gave it a charm for which its meager elements but half accounted.

He thought he had never seen anything so characteristically French; all the French novels seemed to have described it, all the French landscapists to have painted it. The fields and trees were of a cool metallic green; the grass looked as if it might stain his trousers and the foliage his hands. The clear light had a mild grayness, the sheen of silver, not of gold, was in the workaday sun. A great red-roofed high-stacked farmhouse, with whitewashed walls and a straggling yard, surveyed the high-road, on one side, from behind a transparent curtain of poplars. A narrow stream half-choked with emerald rushes and edged with gray aspens occupied the opposite quarter. The meadows rolled and sloped away gently to the low horizon, which was barely concealed by the continuous line of clipped and marshaled trees. The prospect was not rich, but had a frank homeliness that touched the young man's fancy. It was full of light atmosphere and diffused clearness, and if it was prosaic it was somehow sociable.

Longmore was disposed to walk farther, and he advanced along the road beneath the poplars. In twenty minutes he came to a village which straggled away to the right, among orchards and *potagers*. On the left, at a stone's throw from the road, stood a little pink-faced inn which reminded him that he had not breakfasted, having left home with a prevision of hospitality from Madame de Mauves. In the inn he found a brick-tiled parlor and a hostess in sabots and a white cap, whom over the omelet she speedily served him—borrowing license from the bottle of sound red wine that accompanied it—he assured she was a true artist. To reward his compliment she invited him to smoke his cigar in her little garden behind the house.

Here he found a *tonnelle* and a view of tinted crops stretching down to the stream. The *tonnelle* was rather close, and he pre-

ferred to lounge on a bench against the pink wall, in the sun, which was not too hot. Here, as he rested and gazed and mused, he fell into a train of thought which, in an indefinable fashion, was a soft influence from the scene about him. His heart, which had been beating fast for the past three hours, gradually checked its pulses and left him looking at life with rather a more level gaze. The friendly tavern sounds coming out through the open windows, the sunny stillness of the yellowing grain which covered so much vigorous natural life, conveyed no strained nor high-pitched message, had little to say about renunciation—nothing at all about spiritual zeal. They communicated the sense of plain ripe nature, expressed the unperverted reality of things, declared that the common lot isn't brilliantly amusing and that the part of wisdom is to grasp frankly at experience lest you miss it altogether. What reason there was for his beginning to wonder after this whether a deeply wounded heart might be soothed and healed by such a scene, it would be difficult to explain; certain it was that as he sat there he dreamt, awake, of an unhappy woman who strolled by the slow-flowing stream before him and who pulled down the fruit-laden boughs in the orchards. He mused and mused, and at last found himself quite angry that he couldn't somehow think worse of Madame de Mauves—or at any rate think otherwise. He could fairly claim that in the romantic way he asked very little of life—made modest demands on passion: why then should his only passion be born to ill fortune? Why should his first—his last—glimpse of positive happiness be so indissolubly linked with renunciation?

It is perhaps because, like many spirits of the same stock, he had in his composition a lurking principle of sacrifice, sacrifice for sacrifice's sake, to the authority of which he had ever paid due deference, that he now felt all the vehemence of rebellion. To renounce, to renounce again, to renounce forever, was this all that youth and longing and ardor were meant for? Was experience to be muffled and mutilated like an indecent picture? Was a man to sit and deliberately condemn his future to be the blank memory of a regret rather than the long possession of a treasure? Sacrifice? The word was a trap for minds muddled

by fear, an ignoble refuge of weakness. To insist now seemed not to dare, but simply to *be*, to live on possible terms.

His hostess came out to hang a moist cloth on the hedge, and, though her guest was sitting quietly enough, she might have imagined in his kindled eyes a flattering testimony to the quality of her wine. As she turned back into the house she was met by a young man of whom Longmore took note in spite of his high distraction. He was evidently a member of that jovial fraternity of artists whose very shabbiness has an affinity with the unestablished and unexpected in life—the element often gazed at with a certain wistfulness out of the curtained windows even of the highest respectability. Longmore was struck first with his looking like a very clever man and then with his looking like a contented one. The combination, as it was expressed in his face, might have arrested the attention of a less exasperated reasoner. He had a slouched hat and a yellow beard, a light easel under one arm, and an unfinished sketch in oils under the other. He stopped and stood talking for some moments to the landlady, while something pleasant played in his face. They were discussing the possibilities of dinner; the hostess enumerated some very savory ones, and he nodded briskly, assenting to everything. It couldn't be, Longmore thought, that he found such ideal ease in the prospect of lamb chops and spinach and a *croûte aux fruits*. When the dinner had been ordered he turned up his sketch, and the good woman fell to admiring and comparing, to picking up, off by the stream side, the objects represented.

Was it his work, Longmore wondered, that made him so happy? Was a strong talent the best thing in the world? The landlady went back to her kitchen, and the young painter stood, as if he were waiting for something, beside the gate which opened upon the path across the fields. Longmore sat brooding and asking himself if it weren't probably better to cultivate the arts than to cultivate the passions. Before he had answered the question the painter had grown tired of waiting. He had picked up a pebble, tossed it lightly into an upper window and called familiarly, "Claudine!"

Claudine appeared; Longmore heard her at the window, bid-

ding the young man cultivate patience. "But I'm losing my light," he said; "I must have my shadows in the same place as yesterday."

"Go without me then," Claudine answered; "I'll join you in ten minutes." Her voice was fresh and young; it represented almost aggressively to Longmore that she was as pleased as her companion.

"Don't forget the Chénier," cried the young man, who, turning away, passed out of the gate and followed the path across the fields until he disappeared among the trees by the side of the stream. Who might Claudine be? Longmore vaguely wondered; and was she as pretty as her voice? Before long he had a chance to satisfy himself; she came out of the house with her hat and parasol, prepared to follow her companion. She had on a pink muslin dress and a little white hat, and she was as pretty as suffices almost any Frenchwoman to be pleasing. She had a clear brown skin and a bright dark eye and a step that made walking as light a matter as being blown—and this even though she happened to be at the moment not a little overweighted. Her hands were encumbered with various articles involved in her pursuit of her friend. In one arm she held her parasol and a large roll of needlework, and in the other a shawl and a heavy white umbrella, such as painters use for sketching. Meanwhile she was trying to thrust into her pocket a paper-covered volume which Longmore saw to be the poems of André Chénier, and in the effort dropping the large umbrella and marking this with a half-smiled exclamation of disgust. Longmore stepped forward and picked up the umbrella, and as she, protesting her gratitude, put out her hand to take it, he recognized her as too obliging to the young man who had preceded her.

"You've too much to carry," he said; "you must let me help you."

"You're very good, monsieur," she answered. "My husband always forgets something. He can do nothing *without* his umbrella. He is *d'une étourderie*—!"

"You must allow me to carry the umbrella," Longmore risked; "there's too much of it for a lady."

She assented, after many compliments to his politeness; and he walked by her side into the meadow. She went lightly and rapidly, picking her steps and glancing forward to catch a glimpse of her husband. She was graceful, she was charming, she had an air of decision and yet of accommodation, and it seemed to our friend that a young artist would work none the worse for having her seated at his side reading Chénier's iambics. They were newly married, he supposed, and evidently their path of life had none of the mocking crookedness of some others. They asked little; but what need to ask more than such quiet summer days by a shady stream, with a comrade all amiability, to say nothing of art and books and a wide unmenaced horizon? To spend such a morning, to stroll back to dinner in the red-tiled parlor of the inn, to ramble away again as the sun got low—all this was a vision of delight which floated before him only to torture him with a sense of the impossible. All Frenchwomen were not coquettes, he noted, as he kept pace with his companion. She uttered a word now and then for politeness' sake, but she never looked at him and seemed not in the least to care that he was a well-favored and well-dressed young man. She cared for nothing but the young artist in the shabby coat and the slouched hat, and for discovering where he had set up his easel.

This was soon done. He was encamped under the trees, close to the stream, and, in the diffused green shade of the little wood, couldn't have felt immediate need of his umbrella. He received a free rebuke, however, for forgetting it, and was informed of what he owed to Longmore's complaisance. He was duly grateful; he thanked our hero warmly and offered him a seat on the grass. But Longmore felt himself a marplot and lingered only long enough to glance at the young man's sketch and to see in it an easy rendering of the silvery stream and the vivid green rushes. The young wife had spread her shawl on the grass at the base of a tree and meant to seat herself when he had left them, meant to murmur Chénier's verses to the music of the gurgling river. Longmore looked a while from one of these lucky persons to the other, barely stifled a sigh, bade them good morning, and took his departure. He knew neither where to go

nor what to do; he seemed afloat on the sea of ineffectual longing. He strolled slowly back to the inn, where, in the doorway, he met the landlady returning from the butcher's with the lamb chops for the dinner of her lodgers.

"Monsieur has made the acquaintance of the *dame* of our young painter," she said with a free smile—a smile too free for malicious meanings. "Monsieur has perhaps seen the young man's picture. It appears that he's *d'une jolie force*."

"His picture's very charming," said Longmore, "but his *dame* is more charming still."

"She's a very nice little woman; but I pity her all the more."

"I don't see why she's to be pitied," Longmore pleaded. "They seem a very happy couple."

The landlady gave a knowing nod. "Don't trust to it, monsieur! Those artists—*ça n'a pas de principes!* From one day to another he can plant her there! I know them, *allez*. I've had them here very often; one year with one, another year with another."

Longmore was at first puzzled. Then, "You mean she's not his wife?" he asked.

She took it responsibly. "What shall I tell you? They're not *des hommes sérieux*, those gentlemen! They don't engage for eternity. It's none of my business, and I've no wish to speak ill of madame. She's *gentille*—but *gentille*, and she loves her *jeune homme* to distraction."

"Who then is so distinguished a young woman?" asked Longmore. "What do you know about her?"

"Nothing for certain; but it's my belief that she's better than he. I've even gone so far as to believe that she's a lady—a *vraie dame*—and that she has given up a great many things for him. I do the best I can for them, but I don't believe she has had all her life to put up with a dinner of two courses." And she turned over her lamb chops tenderly, as to say that though a good cook could imagine better things, yet if *you* could have but one course lamb chops had much in their favor. "I shall do them with bread crumbs. *Voilà les femmes, monsieur!*"

Longmore turned away with the feeling that women were in-

deed a measureless mystery, and that it was hard to say in which of their forms of perversity there was most merit. He walked back to Saint-Germain more slowly than he had come, with less philosophic resignation to any event and more of the urgent egotism of the passion pronounced by philosophers the supremely selfish one. Now and then the episode of the happy young painter and the charming woman who had given up a great many things for him rose vividly in his mind and seemed to mock his moral unrest like some obtrusive vision of unattainable bliss.

The landlady's gossip had cast no shadow on its brightness; her voice seemed that of the vulgar chorus of the uninitiated, which stands always ready with its gross prose rendering of the inspired passages of human action. Was it possible a man could take *that* from a woman—take all that lent lightness to that other woman's footstep and grace to her surrender and not give her the absolute certainty of a devotion as unalterable as the process of the sun? Was it possible that so clear a harmony had the seeds of trouble, that the charm of so perfect union could be broken by anything but death? Longmore felt an immense desire to cry out a thousand times, "No!" for it seemed to him at last that he was somehow only a graver equivalent of the young lover and that rustling Claudine was a lighter sketch of Madame de Mauves. The heat of the sun, as he walked along, became oppressive, and when he re-entered the forest he turned aside into the deepest shade he could find and stretched himself on the mossy ground at the foot of a great beech. He lay for a while staring up into the verdurous dusk overhead and trying mentally to see his friend at Saint-Germain hurry toward some quiet stream side where *he* waited, as he had seen that trusting creature hurry an hour before. It would be hard to say how well he succeeded; but the effort soothed rather than excited him, and as he had had a good deal both of moral and physical fatigue he sank at last into a quiet sleep. While he slept moreover he had a strange and vivid dream. He seemed to be in a wood, very much like the one on which his eyes had lately closed; but the wood was divided by the murmuring stream he had left an hour

before. He was walking up and down, he thought, restlessly and in intense expectation of some momentous event. Suddenly, at a distance, through the trees, he saw a gleam of a woman's dress, on which he hastened to meet her. As he advanced he recognized her, but he saw at the same time that she was on the other bank of the river. She seemed at first not to notice him, but when they had come to opposite places she stopped and looked at him very gravely and pityingly. She made him no sign that he must cross the stream, but he wished unutterably to stand by her side. He knew the water was deep, and it seemed to him he knew how he should have to breast it and how he feared that when he rose to the surface she would have disappeared. Nevertheless he was going to plunge when a boat turned into the current from above and came swiftly toward them, guided by an oarsman who was sitting so that they couldn't see his face. He brought the boat to the bank where Longmore stood; the latter stepped in, and with a few strokes they touched the opposite shore. Longmore got out and, though he was sure he had crossed the stream, Madame de Mauves was not there. He turned with a kind of agony and saw that now she was on the other bank—the one he had left. She gave him a grave silent glance and walked away up the stream. The boat and the boatman resumed their course, but after going a short distance they stopped and the boatman turned back and looked at the still divided couple. Then Longmore recognized him—just as he had recognized him a few days before at the restaurant in the Bois de Boulogne.

VIII

He must have slept some time after he ceased dreaming, for he had no immediate memory of this vision. It came back to him later, after he had roused himself and had walked nearly home. No great arrangement was needed to make it seem a striking allegory, and it haunted and oppressed him for the rest of the day. He took refuge, however, in his quickened conviction that the only sound policy in life is to grasp unsparingly at

happiness; and it seemed no more than one of the vigorous measures dictated by such a policy to return that evening to Madame de Mauves. And yet when he had decided to do so and had carefully dressed himself he felt an irresistible nervous tremor which made it easier to linger at his open window, wondering with a strange mixture of dread and desire whether Madame Clairin had repeated to her sister-in-law what she had said to him. His presence now might be simply a gratuitous annoyance, and yet his absence might seem to imply that it was in the power of circumstances to make them ashamed to meet each other's eyes. He sat a long time with his head in his hands, lost in a painful confusion of hopes and ambiguities. He felt at moments as if he could throttle Madame Clairin, and yet couldn't help asking himself if it weren't possible she had done him a service. It was late when he left the hotel, and as he entered the gate of the other house his heart beat so fast that he was sure his voice would show it.

The servant ushered him into the drawing room, which was empty and with the lamp burning low. But the long windows were open and their light curtains swaying in a soft warm wind, so that Longmore immediately stepped out upon the terrace. There he found Madame de Mauves alone, slowly pacing its length. She was dressed in white, very simply, and her hair was arranged not as she usually wore it, but in a single loose coil and as if she were unprepared for company. She stopped when she saw her friend, showed some surprise, uttered an exclamation, and stood waiting for him to speak. He tried, with his eyes on her, to say something, but found no words. He knew it was awkward, it was offensive, to stand gazing at her; but he couldn't say what was suitable and mightn't say what he wished. Her face was indistinct in the dim light, but he felt her eyes fixed on him and wondered what they expressed. Did they warn him, did they plead, or did they confess to a sense of provocation? For an instant his head swam; he was sure it would make all things clear to stride forward and fold her in his arms. But a moment later he was still dumb there before her; he hadn't moved; he knew she had spoken, but he hadn't understood.

"You were here this morning," she continued; and now, slowly, the meaning of her words came to him. "I had a bad headache and had to shut myself up." She spoke with her usual voice.

Longmore mastered his agitation and answered her without betraying himself. "I hope you're better now."

"Yes, thank you, I'm better—much better."

He waited again and she moved away to a chair and seated herself. After a pause he followed her and leaned closer to her, against the balustrade of the terrace. "I hoped you might have been able to come out for the morning into the forest. I went alone; it was a lovely day, and I took a long walk."

"It was a lovely day," she said absently, and sat with her eyes lowered, slowly opening and closing her fan. Longmore, as he watched her, felt more and more assured her sister-in-law had seen her since her interview with him; that her attitude toward him was changed. It was this same something that hampered the desire with which he had come, or at least converted all his imagined freedom of speech about it to a final hush of wonder. No, certainly, he couldn't clasp her to his arms now, any more than some antique worshiper could have clasped the marble statue in his temple. But Longmore's statue spoke at last with a full human voice and even with a shade of human hesitation. She looked up, and it seemed to him her eyes shone through the dusk.

"I'm very glad you came this evening—and I've a particular reason for being glad. I half expected you, and yet I thought it possible you mightn't come."

"As the case has been presented to me," Longmore answered, "it was impossible I shouldn't come. I've spent every minute of the day in thinking of you."

She made no immediate reply, but continued to open and close her fan thoughtfully. At last, "I've something important to say to you," she resumed with decision. "I want you to know to a certainty that I've a very high opinion of you." Longmore gave an uneasy shift to his position. To what was she coming? But he said nothing, and she went on: "I take a great interest in

you. There's no reason why I shouldn't say it. I feel a great friendship for you." He began to laugh, all awkwardly—he hardly knew why, unless because this seemed the very irony of detachment. But she went on in her way: "You know, I suppose, that a great disappointment always implies a great confidence—a great hope."

"I've certainly hoped," he said, "hoped strongly; but doubtless never rationally enough to have a right to bemoan my disappointment."

There was something troubled in her face that seemed all the while to burn clearer. "You do yourself injustice. I've such confidence in your fairness of mind that I should be greatly disappointed if I were to find it wanting."

"I really almost believe you're amusing yourself at my expense," the young man cried. "My fairness of mind? Of all the question-begging terms!" he laughed. "The only thing for one's mind to be fair to is the thing one *feels*!"

She rose to her feet and looked at him hard. His eyes by this time were accustomed to the imperfect light, and he could see that if she was urgent she was yet beseechingly kind. She shook her head impatiently and came near enough to lay her fan on his arm with a strong pressure. "If that were so, it would be a weary world. I know enough, however, of your probable attitude. You needn't try to express it. It's enough that your sincerity gives me the right to ask a favor of you—to make an intense, a solemn request."

"Make it; I listen."

"*Don't disappoint me.* If you don't understand me now you will tomorrow or very soon. When I said just now that I had a high opinion of you, you see I meant it very seriously," she explained. "It wasn't a vain compliment. I believe there's no appeal one may make to your generosity that can remain long unanswered. If this were to happen—if I were to find you selfish where I thought you generous, narrow where I thought you large"—and she spoke slowly, her voice lingering with all emphasis on each of these words—"vulgar where I thought you rare, I should think worse of human nature. I should take it, I

assure you, very hard indeed. I should say to myself in the dull days of the future: 'There was *one* man who might have done so and so, and he too failed.' But this shan't be. You've made too good an impression on me not to make the very best. If you wish to please me forever there's a way."

She was standing close to him, with her dress touching him, her eyes fixed on his. As she went on her tone became, to his sense, extraordinary, and she offered the odd spectacle of a beautiful woman preaching reason with the most communicative and irresistible passion. Longmore was dazzled, but mystified and bewildered. The intention of her words was all remonstrance, refusal, dismissal, but her presence and effect there, so close, so urgent, so personal, a distracting contradiction of it. She had never been so lovely. In her white dress, with her pale face and deeply lighted brow, she seemed the very spirit of the summer night. When she had ceased speaking she drew a long breath; he felt it on his cheek, and it stirred in his whole being a sudden perverse imagination. Were not her words, in their high impossible rigor, a mere challenge to his sincerity, a mere precaution of her pride, meant to throw into relief her almost ghostly beauty, and wasn't this the only truth, the only law, the only thing to take account of?

He closed his eyes and felt her watch him not without pain and perplexity herself. He looked at her again, met her own eyes, and saw them fill with strange tears. Then this last sophistry of his great desire for her knew itself touched as a bubble is pricked; it died away with a stifled murmur, and her beauty, more and more radiant in the darkness, rose before him as a symbol of something vague which was yet more beautiful than itself. "I may understand you tomorrow," he said, "but I don't understand you now."

"And yet I took counsel with myself today and asked myself how I had best speak to you. On one side I might have refused to see you at all." Longmore made a violent movement, and she added: "In that case I should have written to you. I might see you, I thought, and simply say to you that there were excellent reasons why we should part, and that I begged this visit should

be your last. This I inclined to do; what made me decide otherwise was—well, simply that I like you so. I said to myself that I should be glad to remember in future days, not that I had, in the horrible phrase, got rid of you, but that you had gone away out of the fullness of your own wisdom and the excellence of your own taste.”

“Ah, wisdom and taste!” the poor young man wailed.

“I’m prepared, if necessary,” Madame de Mauves continued after a pause, “to fall back on my strict right. But, as I said before, I shall be greatly disappointed if I’m obliged to do that.”

“When I listen to your horrible and unnatural lucidity,” Longmore answered, “I feel so angry, so merely sore and sick, that I wonder I don’t leave you without more words.”

“If you should go away in anger this idea of mine about our parting would be but half realized,” she returned with no drop in her ardor. “No, I don’t want to think of you as feeling a great pain, I don’t want even to think of you as making a great sacrifice. I want to think of you——”

“As a stupid brute who has never existed, who never *can* exist!” he broke in. “A creature who could know you without loving you, who could leave you without forever missing you!”

She turned impatiently away and walked to the other end of the terrace. When she came back he saw that her impatience had grown sharp and almost hard. She stood before him again, looking at him from head to foot and without consideration now; so that as the effect of it he felt his assurance finally quite sink. This then she took from him, withholding in consequence something she had meant to say. She moved off afresh, walked to the other end of the terrace, and stood there with her face to the garden. She assumed that he understood her, and slowly, slowly, half as the fruit of this mute pressure, he let everything go but the rage of a purpose somehow still to please her. She was giving him a chance to do gallantly what it seemed unworthy of both of them he should do meanly. She must have “liked” him indeed, as she said, to wish so to spare him, to go to the trouble of conceiving an ideal of conduct for him. With this sense of her tenderness still in her dreadful

consistency, his spirit rose with a new flight and suddenly felt itself breathe clearer air. Her profession ceased to seem a mere bribe to his eagerness; it was charged with eagerness itself; it was a present reward and would somehow last. He moved rapidly toward her as with the sense of a gage that he might sublimely yet immediately enjoy.

They were separated by two thirds of the length of the terrace, and he had to pass the drawing-room window. As he did so he started with an exclamation. Madame Clairin stood framed in the opening as if, though just arriving on the scene, she too were already aware of its interest. Conscious, apparently, that she might be suspected of having watched them she stepped forward with a smile and looked from one to the other. "Such a tête-à-tête as that one owes no apology for interrupting. One ought to come in for good manners."

Madame de Mauves turned to her, but answered nothing. She looked straight at Longmore, and her eyes shone with a luster that struck him as divine. He was not exactly sure indeed what she meant them to say, but it translated itself to something that would do. "Call it what you will, what you've wanted to urge upon me is the thing this woman can best conceive. What I ask of you is something she can't begin to!" They seemed somehow to beg him to suffer her to be triumphantly herself, and to intimate—yet this too all decently—how little that self was of Madame Clairin's particular swelling measure. He felt an immense answering desire not to do anything then that might seem probable or *prévu* to this lady. He had laid his hat and stick on the parapet of the terrace. He took them up, offered his hand to Madame de Mauves with a simple good night, bowed silently to Madame Clairin, and found his way, with tingling ears, out of the place.

IX

He went home and, without lighting his candle, flung himself on his bed. But he got no sleep till morning; he lay hour after hour tossing, thinking, wondering; his mind had never been so active. It seemed to him his friend had laid on him in those last

moments a heavy charge and had expressed herself almost as handsomely as if she had listened complacently to an assurance of his love. It was neither easy nor delightful thoroughly to understand her; but little by little her perfect meaning sank into his mind and soothed it with a sense of opportunity which somehow stifled his sense of loss. For, to begin with, she meant that she could love him in no degree or contingency, in no imaginable future. This was absolute—he knew he could no more alter it than he could pull down one of the constellations he lay gazing at through his open window. He wondered to what it was, in the background of her life, she had so dedicated herself. A conception of duty unquenchable to the end? A love that no outrage could stifle? “Great heaven!” he groaned; “is the world so rich in the purest pearls of passion that such tenderness as that can be wasted forever—poured away without a sigh into bottomless darkness?” Had she, in spite of the detestable present, some precious memory that still kept the door of possibility open? Was she prepared to submit to everything and yet to believe? Was it strength, was it weakness, was it a vulgar fear, was it conviction, conscience, constancy?

Longmore sank back with a sigh and an oppressive feeling that it was vain to guess at such a woman’s motives. He only felt that those of this one were buried deep in her soul and that they must be of the noblest, must contain nothing base. He had his hard impression that endless constancy was all her law—a constancy that still found a foothold among crumbling ruins. “She has loved once,” he said to himself as he rose and wandered to his window; “and that’s forever. Yes, yes—if she loved again she’d be *common*.” He stood for a long time looking out into the starlit silence of the town and forest and thinking of what life would have been if his constancy had met her own in earlier days. But life was this now, and he must live. It was living, really, to stand there with such a faith even in oneself still flung over one by such hands. He was not to disappoint her, he was to justify a conception it had beguiled her weariness to form. His imagination embraced it; he threw back his head and seemed to be looking for his friend’s conception among the

blinking, mocking stars. But it came to him rather on the mild night wind wandering in over the house tops which covered the rest of so many heavy human hearts. What she asked he seemed to feel her ask not for her own sake—she feared nothing, she needed nothing—but for that of his own happiness and his own character. He must assent to destiny. Why else was he young and strong, intelligent and resolute? He mustn't give it to her to reproach him with thinking she had had a moment's attention for his love, give it to her to plead, to argue, to break off in bitterness. He must see everything from above, her indifference and his own ardor; he must prove his strength, must do the handsome thing, must decide that the handsome thing was to submit to the inevitable, to be supremely delicate, to spare her all pain, to stifle his passion, to ask no compensation, to depart without waiting, and to try to believe that wisdom is its own reward. All this, neither more nor less, it was a matter of beautiful friendship with him for her to expect of him. And what should he himself gain by it? He should have pleased her! Well, he flung himself on his bed again, fell asleep at last, and slept till morning.

Before noon next day he had made up his mind to leave Saint-Germain at once. It seemed easiest to go without seeing her, and yet if he might ask for a grain of "compensation" this would be five minutes face to face with her. He passed a restless day. Wherever he went he saw her stand before him in the dusky halo of evening, saw her look at him with an air of still negation more intoxicating than the most passionate self-surrender. He must certainly go, and yet it was hideously hard. He compromised and went to Paris to spend the rest of the day. He strolled along the boulevard and paused sightlessly before the shops, sat a while in the Tuileries gardens and looked at the shabby unfortunates for whom this only ~~was~~ nature and summer; but simply felt afresh, as a result of **it all**, the dusty, dreary, lonely world to which **Madame de Mauves** had consigned him.

In a somber mood he made his way back to the center of motion and sat down at a table before a café door, on the great plain

of hot asphalt. Night arrived, the lamps were lighted, the tables near him found occupants, and Paris began to wear that evening grimace of hers that seems to tell, in the flare of plate glass and of theater doors, the muffled rumble of swift-rolling carriages, how this is no world for you unless you have your pockets lined and your delicacies perverted. Longmore, however, had neither scruples nor desires; he looked at the great pre-occupied place for the first time with an easy sense of repaying its indifference. Before long a carriage drove up to the pavement directly in front of him and remained standing for several minutes without sign from its occupant. It was one of those neat plain coupés, drawn by a single powerful horse, in which the *flâneur* figures a pale handsome woman buried among silk cushions and yawning as she sees the gas lamps glittering in the gutters. At last the door opened and out stepped Richard de Mauves. He stopped and leaned on the window for some time, talking in an excited manner to a person within. At last he gave a nod and the carriage rolled away. He stood swinging his cane and looking up and down the boulevard, with the air of a man fumbling, as one might say, the loose change of time. He turned toward the café and was apparently, for want of anything better worth his attention, about to seat himself at one of the tables when he noticed Longmore. He wavered an instant and then, without a shade of difference in his careless gait, advanced to the accompaniment of a thin recognition.

It was the first time they had met since their encounter in the forest after Longmore's false start for Brussels. Madame Clairin's revelations, as he might have regarded them, had not made the Count especially present to his mind; he had had another call to meet than the call of disgust. But now, as M. de Mauves came toward him, he felt abhorrence well up. He made out, however, for the first time, a cloud on this nobleman's superior clearness, and a delight at finding the shoe somewhere at last pinching *him*, mingled with the resolve to be blank and unaccommodating, enabled him to meet the occasion with due promptness.

M. de Mauves sat down, and the two men looked at each

other across the table, exchanging formal remarks that did little to lend grace to their encounter. Longmore had no reason to suppose the Count knew of his sister's various interventions. He was sure M. de Mauves cared very little about his opinions, and yet he had a sense of something grim in his own New York face which would have made him change color if keener suspicion had helped it to be read there. M. de Mauves didn't change color, but he looked at his wife's so oddly, so more than naturally (wouldn't it be?) detached friend with an intentness that betrayed at once an irritating memory of the episode in the Bois de Boulogne and such vigilant curiosity as was natural to a gentleman who had entrusted his "honor" to another gentleman's magnanimity—or to his artlessness.

It might appear that these virtues shone out of our young man less engagingly or reassuringly than a few days before; the shadow at any rate fell darker across the brow of his critic, who turned away and frowned while lighting a cigar. The person in the coupé, he accordingly judged, whether or no the same person as the heroine of the episode of the Bois de Boulogne, was not a source of unalloyed delight. Longmore had dark blue eyes of admirable clarity, settled truth-telling eyes which had in his childhood always made his harshest taskmasters smile at his notion of a subterfuge. An observer watching the two men and knowing something of their relations would certainly have said that what he had at last both to recognize and to miss in those eyes must not a little have puzzled and tormented M. de Mauves. They took possession of him, they laid him out, they measured him in that state of flatness, they triumphed over him, they treated him as no pair of eyes had perhaps ever treated any member of his family before. The Count's scheme had been to provide for a positive state of ease on the part of no one save himself, but here was Longmore already, if appearances perhaps not appreciable to the vulgar meant anything, primed as for some prospect of pleasure more than Parisian. Was this candid young barbarian but a *faux bonhomme* after all? He had never really quite satisfied his occasional host, but was he now, for a climax, to leave him almost gaping?

M. de Mauves, as if hating to seem preoccupied, took up the evening paper to help himself to seem indifferent. As he glanced over it he threw off some perfunctory allusion to the crisis—the political—which enabled Longmore to reply with perfect veracity that, with other things to think about, he had had no attention to spare for it. And yet our hero was in truth far from secure against rueful reflection. The Count's ruffled state was a comfort so far as it pointed to the possibility that the lady in the coupé might be proving too many for him; but it ministered to no vindictive sweetness for Longmore so far as it should perhaps represent rising jealousy. It passed through his mind that jealousy is a passion with a double face and that on one of its sides it may sometimes almost look generous. It glimmered upon him odiously M. de Mauves might grow ashamed of his political compact with his wife, and he felt how far more tolerable it would be in future to think of him as always impertinent than to think of him as occasionally contrite. The two men pretended meanwhile for half an hour to outsit each other conveniently; and the end—at that rate—might have been distant had not the tension in some degree yielded to the arrival of a friend of M. de Mauves—a tall, pale, consumptive-looking dandy who filled the air with the odor of heliotrope. He looked up and down the boulevard wearily, examined the Count's garments in some detail, then appeared to refer restlessly to his own, and at last announced resignedly that the Duchess was in town. M. de Mauves must come with him to call; she had abused him dreadfully a couple of evenings before—a sure sign she wanted to see him. "I depend on you," said with an infantine drawl this specimen of an order Longmore felt he had never had occasion so intimately to appreciate, "to put her *en train*."

M. de Mauves resisted, he protested that he was *d'une humeur massacrant*; but at last he allowed himself to be drawn to his feet and stood looking awkwardly—awkwardly for M. de Mauves—at Longmore. "You'll excuse me," he appeared to find some difficulty in saying; "you too probably have occupation for the evening?"

"None but to catch my train." And our friend looked at his watch.

"Ah, you go back to Saint-Germain?"

"In half an hour."

M. de Mauves seemed on the point of disengaging himself from his companion's arm, which was locked in his own; but on the latter's uttering some persuasive murmur he lifted his hat stiffly and turned away.

Longmore the next day wandered off to the terrace to try and beguile the restlessness with which he waited for the evening; he wished to see Madame de Mauves for the last time at the hour of long shadows and pale reflected amber light, as he had almost always seen her. Destiny, however, took no account of this humble plea for poetic justice; it was appointed him to meet her seated by the great walk under a tree and alone. The hour made the place almost empty; the day was warm, but as he took his place beside her a light breeze stirred the leafy edges of their broad circle of shadow. She looked at him almost with no pretense of not having believed herself already rid of him, and he at once told her that he should leave Saint-Germain that evening, but must first bid her farewell. Her face lighted a moment, he fancied, as he spoke; but she said nothing, only turning it off to far Paris which lay twinkling and flashing through hot exhalations. "I've a request to make of you," he added. "That you think of me as a man who has felt much and claimed little."

She drew a long breath which almost suggested pain. "I can't think of you as unhappy. That's impossible. You've a life to lead, you've duties, talents, inspirations, interests. I shall hear of your career. And then," she pursued after a pause, though as if it had before this quite been settled between them, "one can't be unhappy through having a better opinion of a friend instead of a worse."

For a moment he failed to understand her. "Do you mean that there can be varying degrees in my opinion of you?"

She rose and pushed away her chair. "I mean," she said quickly, "that it's better to have done nothing in bitterness—nothing in passion." And she began to walk.

Longmore followed her without answering at first. But he took off his hat and with his pocket handkerchief wiped his forehead. "Where shall you go? what shall you do?" he simply asked at last.

"Do? I shall do as I've always done—except perhaps that I shall go for a while to my husband's old home."

"I shall go to *my* old one. I've done with Europe for the present," the young man added.

She glanced at him as he walked beside her, after he had spoken these words, and then bent her eyes for a long time on the ground. But suddenly, as if aware of her going too far, she stopped and put out her hand. "Good-by. May you have all the happiness you deserve!"

He took her hand with his eyes on her, but something was at work in him that made it impossible to deal in the easy way with her touch. Something of infinite value was floating past him, and he had taken an oath, with which any such case interfered, not to raise a finger to stop it. It was borne by the strong current of the world's great life and not of his own small one. Madame de Mauves disengaged herself, gathered in her long scarf, and smiled at him almost as you would do at a child you should wish to encourage. Several moments later he was still there watching her leave him and leave him. When she was out of sight he shook himself, walked at once back to his hotel and, without waiting for the evening train, paid his bill and departed.

Later in the day M. de Mauves came into his wife's drawing room, where she sat waiting to be summoned to dinner. He had dressed as he usually didn't dress for dining at home. He walked up and down for some moments in silence, then rang the bell for a servant, and went out into the hall to meet him. He ordered the carriage to take him to the station, paused a moment with his hand on the knob of the door, dismissed the servant angrily as the latter lingered observing him, re-entered the drawing room, resumed his restless walk, and at last stopped abruptly before his wife, who had taken up a book. "May I ask the favor," he said with evident effort, in spite of a forced smile as of allusion to a large past exercise of the very best taste, "of having a question answered?"

"It's a favor I never refused," she replied.

"Very true. Do you expect this evening a visit from Mr. Longmore?"

"Mr. Longmore," said his wife, "has left Saint-Germain." M. de Mauves waited, but his smile expired. "Mr. Longmore," his wife continued, "has gone to America."

M. de Mauves took it—a rare thing for him—with confessed, if momentary, intellectual indigence. But he raised, as it were, the wind. "Has anything happened?" he asked. "Had he a sudden call?"

But his question received no answer. At the same moment the servant threw open the door and announced dinner; Madame Clairin rustled in, rubbing her white hands, Madame de Mauves passed silently into the dining room, but he remained outside—outside of more things, clearly, than his mere *salle-à-manger*. Before long he went forth to the terrace and continued his uneasy walk. At the end of a quarter of an hour the servant came to let him know that his carriage was at the door. "Send it away," he said without hesitation. "I shan't use it." When the ladies had half finished dinner he returned and joined them, with a formal apology to his wife for his inconsequence.

The dishes were brought back, but he hardly tasted them; he drank on the other hand more wine than usual. There was little talk, scarcely a convivial sound save the occasional expressive appreciative "M-m-m!" of Madame Clairin over the succulence of some dish. Twice this lady saw her brother's eyes, fixed on her own over his wineglass, put to her a question she knew she should have to irritate him later on by not being able to answer. She replied, for the present at least, by an elevation of the eyebrows that resembled even to her own humor the vain raising of an umbrella in anticipation of a storm. M. de Mauves was left alone to finish his wine; he sat over it for more than an hour and let the darkness gather about him. At last the servant came in with a letter and lighted a candle. The letter was a telegram, which M. de Mauves, when he had read it, burnt at the candle. After five minutes' meditation he wrote a message on the back of a visiting card and gave it to the servant to carry

to the office. The man knew quite as much as his master suspected about the lady to whom the telegram was addressed; but its contents puzzled him; they consisted of the single word "*Impossible*." As the evening passed without her brother's reappearing in the drawing room, Madame Clairin came to him where he sat by his solitary candle. He took no notice of her presence for some time, but this affected her as unexpected indulgence. At last, however, he spoke with a particular harshness. "*Ce jeune mufle* has gone home at an hour's notice. What the devil does it mean?"

Madame Clairin now felt thankful for her umbrella. "It means that I've a sister-in-law whom I've not the honor to understand."

He said nothing more and silently allowed her, after a little, to depart. It had been her duty to provide him with an explanation, and he was disgusted with her blankness; but she was—if there was no more to come—getting off easily. When she had gone he went into the garden and walked up and down with his cigar. He saw his wife seated alone on the terrace, but remained below, wandering, turning, pausing, lingering. He remained a long time. It grew late and Madame de Mauves disappeared. Toward midnight he dropped upon a bench, tired, with a long vague exhalation of unrest. It was sinking into his spirit that he too didn't understand Madame Clairin's sister-in-law.

Longmore was obliged to wait a week in London for a ship. It was very hot, and he went out one day to Richmond. In the garden of the hotel at which he dined he met his friend Mrs. Draper, who was staying there. She made eager inquiry about Madame de Mauves; but Longmore at first, as they sat looking out at the famous view of the Thames, parried her questions and confined himself to other topics. At last she said she was afraid he had something to conceal; whereupon, after a pause, he asked her if she remembered recommending him, in the letter she had addressed him at Saint-Germain, to draw the sadness from her friend's smile. "The last I saw of her was her smile," he said—"when I bade her good-by."

"I remember urging you to 'console' her," Mrs. Draper re-

turned, "and I wondered afterwards whether—model of discretion as you are—I hadn't cut you out work for which you wouldn't thank me."

"She has her consolation in herself," the young man said; "she needs none that anyone else can offer her. That's for troubles for which—be it more, be it less—our own folly has to answer. Madame de Mauves hasn't a grain of folly left."

"Ah, don't say that!"—Mrs. Draper knowingly protested. "Just a little folly's often very graceful."

Longmore rose to go—she somehow annoyed him. "Don't talk of grace," he said, "till you've measured her reason!"

For two years after his return to America he heard nothing of Madame de Mauves. That he thought of her intently, constantly, I need hardly say; most people wondered why such a clever young man shouldn't "devote" himself to something; but to himself he seemed absorbingly occupied. He never wrote to her; he believed she wouldn't have "liked" it. At last he heard that Mrs. Draper had come home and he immediately called on her. "Of course," she said after the first greetings, "you're dying for news of Madame de Mauves. Prepare yourself for something strange. I heard from her two or three times during the year after your seeing her. She left Saint-Germain and went to live in the country on some old property of her husband's. She wrote me very kind little notes, but I felt somehow that—in spite of what you said about 'consolation'—they were the notes of a wretched woman. The only advice I could have given her was to leave her scamp of a husband and come back to her own land and her own people. But this I didn't feel free to do, and yet it made me so miserable not to be able to help her that I preferred to let our correspondence die a natural death. I had no news of her for a year. Last summer, however, I met at Vichy a clever young Frenchman whom I accidentally learned to be a friend of that charming sister of the Count's, Madame Clairin. I lost no time in asking him what he knew about Madame de Mauves—a countrywoman of mine and an old friend. 'I congratulate you on the friendship of such a person,' he answered. 'That's the terrible little woman who

killed her husband.' You may imagine I promptly asked for an explanation, and he told me—from his point of view—what he called the whole story. M. de Mauves had *fait quelques folies* which his wife had taken absurdly to heart. He had repented and asked her forgiveness, which she had inexorably refused. She was very pretty, and severity must have suited her style; for, whether or no her husband had been in love with her before, he fell madly in love with her now. He was the proudest man in France, but he had begged her on his knees to be readmitted to favor. All in vain! She was stone, she was ice, she was outraged virtue. People noticed a great change in him; he gave up society, ceased to care for anything, looked shockingly. One fine day they discovered he had blown out his brains. My friend had the story of course from Madame Clairin."

Longmore was strongly moved, and his first impulse after he had recovered his composure was to return immediately to Europe. But several years have passed, and he still lingers at home. The truth is that, in the midst of all the ardent tenderness of his memory of Madame de Mauves, he has become conscious of a singular feeling—a feeling of wonder, of uncertainty, of awe.

THE LESSON OF THE MASTER*

I

He had been told the ladies were at church, but this was corrected by what he saw from the top of the steps—they descended from a great height in two arms, with a circular sweep of the most charming effect—at the threshold of the door which, from the long bright gallery, overlooked the immense lawn. Three gentlemen, on the grass, at a distance, sat under the great trees, while the fourth figure showed a crimson dress that told as a “bit of color” amid the fresh rich green. The servant had so far accompanied Paul Overt as to introduce him to this view, after asking him if he wished first to go to his room. The young man declined that privilege, conscious of no disrepair from so short and easy a journey and always liking to take at once a general perceptive possession of a new scene. He stood there a little with his eyes on the group and on the admirable picture, the wide grounds of an old country house near London—that only made it better—on a splendid Sunday in June. “But that lady, who’s *she*?” he said to the servant before the man left him.

“I think she’s Mrs. St. George, sir.”

“Mrs. St. George, the wife of the distinguished ——” Then Paul Overt checked himself, doubting if a footman would know.

“Yes, sir—probably, sir,” said his guide, who appeared to wish to intimate that a person staying at Summersoft would naturally be, if only by alliance, distinguished. His tone, however, made poor Overt himself feel for the moment scantily so.

“And the gentlemen?” Overt went on.

“Well, sir, one of them’s General Fancourt.”

“Ah, yes, I know; thank you.” General Fancourt was distinguished, there was no doubt of that, for something he had

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done, or perhaps even hadn't done—the young man couldn't remember which—some years before in India. The servant went away, leaving the glass doors open into the gallery, and Paul Overt remained at the head of the wide double staircase, saying to himself that the place was sweet and promised a pleasant visit, while he leaned on the balustrade of fine old iron-work which, like all the other details, was of the same period as the house. It all went together and spoke in one voice—a rich English voice of the early part of the eighteenth century. It might have been church time on a summer's day in the reign of Queen Anne: the stillness was too perfect to be modern, the nearness counted so as distance, and there was something so fresh and sound in the originality of the large smooth house, the expanse of beautiful brickwork that showed for pink rather than red and that had been kept clear of messy creepers by the law under which a woman with a rare complexion disdains a veil. When Paul Overt became aware that the people under the trees had noticed him, he turned back through the open doors into the great gallery which was the pride of the place. It marched across from end to end and seemed—with its bright colors, its high paneled windows, its faded flowered chintzes, its quickly recognized portraits and pictures, the blue-and-white china of its cabinets and the attenuated festoons and rosettes of its ceiling—a cheerful, upholstered avenue into the other century.

Our friend was slightly nervous; that went with his character as a student of fine prose, went with the artist's general disposition to vibrate; and there was a particular thrill in the idea that Henry St. George might be a member of the party. For the young aspirant he had remained a high literary figure, in spite of the lower range of production to which he had fallen after his three first great successes, the comparative absence of quality in his later work. There had been moments when Paul Overt almost shed tears for this; but now that he was near him—he had never met him—he was conscious only of the fine original source and of his own immense debt. After he had taken a turn or two up and down the gallery, he came out again and

descended the steps. He was but slenderly supplied with a certain social boldness—it was really a weakness in him—so that, conscious of a want of acquaintance with the four persons in the distance, he gave way to motions recommended by their not committing him to a positive approach. There was a fine English awkwardness in this—he felt that too as he sauntered vaguely and obliquely across the lawn, taking an independent line. Fortunately there was an equally fine English directness in the way one of the gentlemen presently rose and made as if to “stalk” him, though with an air of conciliation and reassurance. To this demonstration Paul Overt instantly responded, even if the gentleman were not his host. He was tall, straight, and elderly and had, like the great house itself, a pink, smiling face, and into the bargain a white mustache. Our young man met him halfway while he laughed and said: “Er—Lady Watermouth told us you were coming; she asked me just to look after you.” Paul Overt thanked him, liking him on the spot, and turned round with him to walk toward the others. “They’ve all gone to church—all except us,” the stranger continued as they went; “we’re just sitting here—it’s so jolly.” Overt pronounced it jolly indeed: it was such a lovely place. He mentioned that he was having the charming impression for the first time.

“Ah, you’ve not been here before?” said his companion. “It’s a nice little place—not much to *do*, you know.” Overt wondered what he wanted to “do”—he felt that he himself was doing so much. By the time they came to where the others sat he had recognized his initiator for a military man and—such was the turn of Overt’s imagination—had found him thus still more sympathetic. He would naturally have a need for action, for deeds at variance with the pacific pastoral scene. He was evidently so good-natured, however, that he accepted the inglorious hour for what it was worth. Paul Overt shared it with him and with his companions for the next twenty minutes; the latter looked at him and he looked at them without knowing much who they were, while the talk went on without much telling him even what it meant. It seemed indeed to mean nothing

in particular; it wandered, with casual pointless pauses and short terrestrial flights, amid names of persons and places—names which, for our friend, had no great power of evocation. It was all sociable and slow, as was right and natural of a warm Sunday morning.

His first attention was given to the question, privately considered, of whether one of the two younger men would be Henry St. George. He knew many of his distinguished contemporaries by their photographs, but had never, as happened, seen a portrait of the great misguided novelist. One of the gentlemen was unimaginable—he was too young; and the other scarcely looked clever enough, with such mild, indiscriminating eyes. If those eyes were St. George's the problem presented by the ill-matched parts of his genius would be still more difficult of solution. Besides, the deportment of their proprietor was not, as regards the lady in the red dress, such as could be natural, toward the wife of his bosom, even to a writer accused by several critics of sacrificing too much to manner. Lastly, Paul Overt had a vague sense that if the gentleman with the expressionless eyes bore the name that had set his heart beating faster (he also had contradictory, conventional whiskers—the young admirer of the celebrity had never in a mental vision seen *his* face in so vulgar a frame) he would have given him a sign of recognition or of friendliness, would have heard of him a little, would know something about *Ginistrella*, would have an impression of how that fresh fiction had caught the eye of real criticism. Paul Overt had a dread of being grossly proud, but even morbid modesty might view the authorship of *Ginistrella* as constituting a degree of identity. His soldierly friend became clear enough: he was "Fancourt," but was also "the General"; and he mentioned to the new visitor in the course of a few moments that he had but lately returned from twenty years' service abroad.

"And now you remain in England?" the young man asked.

"Oh, yes; I've bought a small house in London."

"And I hope you like it," said Overt, looking at Mrs. St. George.

"Well, a little house in Manchester Square—there's a limit to the enthusiasm *that* inspires."

"Oh, I meant being at home again—being back in Piccadilly."

"My daughter likes Piccadilly—that's the main thing. She's very fond of art and music and literature and all that kind of thing. She missed it in India and she finds it in London, or she hopes she'll find it. Mr. St. George has promised to help her—he has been awfully kind to her. She has gone to church—she's fond of that too—but they'll all be back in a quarter of an hour. You must let me introduce you to her—she'll be so glad to know you. I daresay she has read every blest word you've written."

"I shall be delighted—I haven't written so very many," Overt pleaded, feeling, and without resentment, that the General at least was vagueness itself about that. But he wondered a little why, expressing this friendly disposition, it didn't occur to the doubtless eminent soldier to pronounce the word that would put him in relation with Mrs. St. George. If it was a question of introductions Miss Fancourt—apparently as yet unmarried—was far away, while the wife of his illustrious confrere was almost between them. This lady struck Paul Overt as altogether pretty, with a surprising juvenility and a high smartness of aspect, something that—he could scarcely have said why—served for mystification. St. George certainly had every right to a charming wife, but he himself would never have imagined the important little woman in the aggressively Parisian dress the partner for life, the *alter ego*, of a man of letters. That partner in general, he knew, that second self, was far from presenting herself in a single type: observation had taught him that she was not inveterately, not necessarily plain. But he had never before seen her look so much as if her prosperity had deeper foundations than an ink-spotted study table littered with proof sheets. Mrs. St. George might have been the wife of a gentleman who "kept" books rather than wrote them, who carried on great affairs in the City and made better bargains than those that poets mostly make with publishers. With this she hinted at a success more personal—a success

peculiarly stamping the age in which society, the world of conversation, is a great drawing room with the City for its antechamber. Overt numbered her years at first as some thirty, and then ended by believing that she might approach her fiftieth. But she somehow in this case juggled away the excess and the difference—you only saw them in a rare glimpse, like the rabbit in the conjuror's sleeve. She was extraordinarily white, and her every element and item was pretty; her eyes, her ears, her hair, her voice, her hands, her feet—to which her relaxed attitude in her wicker chair gave a great publicity—and the numerous ribbons and trinkets with which she was bedecked. She looked as if she had put on her best clothes to go to church and then had decided they were too good for that and had stayed at home. She told a story of some length about the shabby way Lady Jane had treated the Duchess, as well as an anecdote in relation to a purchase she had made in Paris—on her way back from Cannes; made for Lady Egbert, who had never refunded the money. Paul Overt suspected her of a tendency to figure great people as larger than life, until he noticed the manner in which she handled Lady Egbert, which was so sharply mutinous that it reassured him. He felt he should have understood her better if he might have met her eye; but she scarcely so much as glanced at him. "Ah, here they come—all the good ones!" she said at last; and Paul Overt admired at his distance the return of the churchgoers—several persons, in couples and threes, advancing in a flicker of sun and shade at the end of a large green vista formed by the level grass and the overarching boughs.

"If you mean to imply that *we're* bad, I protest," said one of the gentlemen—"after making oneself agreeable all the morning!"

"Ah, if they've found you agreeable——!" Mrs. St. George gaily cried. "But if *we're* good the others are better."

"They must be angels then," said the amused General.

"Your husband was an angel, the way he went off at your bidding," the gentleman who had first spoken declared to Mrs. St. George.

"At my bidding?"

"Didn't you make him go to church?"

"I never made him do anything in my life but once—when I made him burn up a bad book. That's all!" At her "That's all!" our young friend broke into an irrepressible laugh; it lasted only a second, but it drew her eyes to him. His own met them, though not long enough to help him to understand her; unless it were a step towards this that he saw on the instant how the burnt book—the way she alluded to it!—would have been one of her husband's finest things.

"A bad book?" her interlocutor repeated.

"I didn't like it. He went to church because your daughter went," she continued to General Fancourt. "I think it my duty to call your attention to his extraordinary demonstrations to your daughter."

"Well, if you don't mind them I don't!" the General laughed.

"*Il s'attache à ses pas*. But I don't wonder—she's so charming."

"I hope she won't make him burn any books!" Paul Overt ventured to exclaim.

"If she'd make him write a few it would be more to the purpose," said Mrs. St. George. "He has been of a laziness of late——!"

Our young man stared—he was so struck with the lady's phraseology. Her "Write a few" seemed to him almost as good as her "That's all." Didn't she, as the wife of a rare artist, know what it was to produce *one* perfect work of art? How in the world did she think they *were* turned off? His private conviction was that, admirably as Henry St. George wrote, he had written for the last ten years, and especially for the last five, only too much, and there *was an* instant during which he felt inwardly solicited to make this public. But before he had spoken, a diversion was effected by the return of the absentees. They strolled up dispersedly—there were eight or ten of them—and the circle under the trees rearranged itself as they took their place in it. They made it much larger, so that Paul Overt could feel—he was always feeling that sort of thing,

as he said to himself—that, if the company had already been interesting, to watch the interest would now become intense. He shook hands with his hostess, who welcomed him without many words, in the manner of a woman able to trust him to understand and conscious that so pleasant an occasion would in every way speak for itself. She offered him no particular facility for sitting by her, and when they had all subsided again he found himself still next General Fancourt, with an unknown lady on his other flank.

“That’s my daughter—that one opposite,” the General said to him without loss of time. Overt saw a tall girl, with magnificent red hair, in a dress of a pretty gray-green tint and of a limp silken texture, a garment that clearly shirked every modern effect. It had therefore somehow the stamp of the latest thing, so that our beholder quickly took her for nothing if not contemporaneous.

“She’s very handsome—very handsome,” he repeated while he considered her. There was something noble in her head, and she appeared fresh and strong.

Her good father surveyed her with complacency, remarking soon: “She looks too hot—that’s her walk. But she’ll be all right presently. Then I’ll make her come over and speak to you.”

“I should be sorry to give you that trouble. If you were to take me over *there*——!” the young man murmured.

“My dear sir, do you suppose I put myself out that way? I don’t mean for you, but for Marian,” the General added.

“I would put myself out for her soon enough,” Overt replied; after which he went on: “Will you be so good as to tell me which of those gentlemen is Henry St. George?”

“The fellow talking to my girl. By Jove, he *is* making up to her—they’re going off for another walk.”

“Ah, is that he—really?” Our friend felt a certain surprise, for the personage before him seemed to trouble a vision which had been vague only while not confronted with the reality. As soon as the reality dawned, the mental image, retiring with a sigh, became substantial enough to suffer a slight wrong. Overt,

who had spent a considerable part of his short life in foreign lands, made now, but not for the first time, the reflection that whereas in those countries he had almost always recognized the artist and the man of letters by his personal "type," the mold of his face, the character of his head, the expression of his figure, and even the indications of his dress, so in England this identification was as little as possible a matter of course, thanks to the greater conformity, the habit of sinking the profession instead of advertising it, the general diffusion of the air of the gentleman—the gentleman committed to no particular set of ideas. More than once, on returning to his own country, he had said to himself about people met in society: "One sees them in this place and that, and one even talks with them; but to find out what they *do* one would really have to be a detective." In respect to several individuals whose work he was the opposite of "drawn to"—perhaps he was wrong—he found himself adding, "No wonder they conceal it—when it's so bad!" He noted that oftener than in France and in Germany his artist looked like a gentleman—that is, like an English one—while, certainly outside a few exceptions, his gentleman didn't look like an artist. St. George was not one of the exceptions; that circumstance he definitely apprehended before the great man had turned his back to walk off with Miss Fancourt. He certainly looked better behind than any foreign man of letters—showed for beautifully correct in his tall black hat and his superior frock coat. Somehow, all the same, these very garments—he wouldn't have minded them so much on a weekday—were disconcerting to Paul Overt, who forgot for the moment that the head of the profession was not a bit better dressed than himself. He had caught a glimpse of a regular face, a fresh color, a brown mustache, and a pair of eyes surely never visited by a fine frenzy, and he promised himself to study these denotements on the first occasion. His superficial sense was that their owner might have passed for a lucky stockbroker—a gentleman driving eastward every morning from a sanitary suburb in a smart dogcart. That carried out the impression already derived from his wife. Paul's glance, after a moment,

traveled back to this lady, and he saw how her own had followed her husband as he moved off with Miss Fancourt. Overt permitted himself to wonder a little if she were jealous when another woman took him away. Then he made out that Mrs. St. George wasn't glaring at the indifferent maiden. Her eyes rested but on her husband, and with unmistakable serenity. That was the way she wanted him to be—she liked his conventional uniform. Overt longed to hear more about the book she had induced him to destroy.

II

As they all came out from luncheon General Fancourt took hold of him with an "I say, I want you to know my girl!" as if the idea had just occurred to him and he hadn't spoken of it before. With the other hand he possessed himself all paternally of the young lady. "You know all about him. I've seen you with his books. She reads everything—everything!" he went on to Paul. The girl smiled at him and then laughed at her father. The General turned away and his daughter spoke—"Isn't papa delightful?"

"He is indeed, Miss Fancourt."

"As if I read you because I read 'everything!'"

"Oh, I don't mean for saying that," said Paul Overt. "I liked him from the moment he began to be kind to me. Then he promised me this privilege."

"It isn't for you he means it—it's for me. If you flatter yourself that he thinks of anything in life but me you'll find you're mistaken. He introduces everyone. He thinks me insatiable."

"You speak just like him," laughed our youth.

"Ah, but sometimes I want to"—and the girl colored. "I don't read everything—I read very little. But I *have* read you."

"Suppose we go into the gallery," said Paul Overt. She pleased him greatly, not so much because of this last remark—though that of course was not too disconcerting—as because, seated opposite to him at luncheon, she had given him for half

an hour the impression of her beautiful face. Something else had come with it—a sense of generosity, of an enthusiasm which, unlike many enthusiasms, was not all manner. That was not spoiled for him by his seeing that the repast had placed her again in familiar contact with Henry St. George. Sitting next her this celebrity was also opposite our young man, who had been able to note that he multiplied the attentions lately brought by his wife to the General's notice. Paul Overt had gathered as well that this lady was not in the least discomposed by these fond excesses and that she gave every sign of an unclouded spirit. She had Lord Masham on one side of her and on the other the accomplished Mr. Mulliner, editor of the new high-class lively evening paper which was expected to meet a want felt in circles increasingly conscious that Conservatism must be made amusing, and unconvinced when assured by those of another political color that it was already amusing enough. At the end of an hour spent in her company Paul Overt thought her still prettier than at the first radiation, and if her profane allusions to her husband's work had not still rung in his ears he should have liked her—so far as it could be a question of that in connection with a woman to whom he had not yet spoken and to whom probably he should never speak if it were left to her. Pretty women were a clear need to this genius, and for the hour it was Miss Fancourt who supplied the want. If Overt had promised himself a closer view the occasion was now of the best, and it brought consequences felt by the young man as important. He saw more in St. George's face, which he liked the better for its not having told its whole story in the first three minutes. That story came out as one read, in short installments—it was excusable that one's analogies should be somewhat professional—and the text was a style considerably involved, a language not easy to translate at sight. There were shades of meaning in it and a vague perspective of history which receded as you advanced. Two facts Paul had particularly heeded. The first of these was that he liked the measured mask much better at inscrutable rest than in social agitation; its almost convulsive smile above all displeased him (as much

as any impression from that source could), whereas the quiet face had a charm that grew in proportion as stillness settled again. The change to the expression of gaiety excited, he made out, very much the private protest of a person sitting gratefully in the twilight when the lamp is brought in too soon. His second reflection was that, though generally averse to the flagrant use of ingratiating arts by a man of age "making up" to a pretty girl, he was not in this case too painfully affected: which seemed to prove either that St. George had a light hand or the air of being younger than he was, or else that Miss Fancourt's own manner somehow made everything right.

Overt walked with her into the gallery, and they strolled to the end of it, looking at the pictures, the cabinets, the charming vista, which harmonized with the prospect of the summer afternoon, resembling it by a long brightness, with great divans and old chairs that figured hours of rest. Such a place as that had the added merit of giving those who came into it plenty to talk about. Miss Fancourt sat down with her new acquaintance on a flowered sofa, the cushions of which, very numerous, were tight ancient cubes of many sizes, and presently said: "I'm so glad to have a chance to thank you."

"To thank me——?" He had to wonder.

"I liked your book so much. I think it splendid."

She sat there smiling at him, and he never asked himself which book she meant; for after all he had written three or four. That seemed a vulgar detail, and he wasn't even gratified by the idea of the pleasure she told him—her handsome bright face told him—he had given her. The feeling she appealed to, or at any rate the feeling she excited, was something larger, something that had little to do with any quickened pulsation of his own vanity. It was responsive admiration of the life she embodied, the young purity and richness of which appeared to imply that real success was to resemble *that*, to live, to bloom, to present the perfection of a fine type, not to have hammered out headachy fancies with a bent back at an ink-stained table. While her gray eyes rested on him—there was a widish space between these, and the division of her rich-colored hair, so thick

that it ventured to be smooth, made a free arch above them—he was almost ashamed of that exercise of the pen which it was her present inclination to commend. He was conscious he should have liked better to please her in some other way. The lines of her face were those of a woman grown, but the child lingered on in her complexion and in the sweetness of her mouth. Above all she was natural—that was indubitable now; more natural than he had supposed at first, perhaps on account of her aesthetic toggery, which was conventionally unconventional, suggesting what he might have called a tortuous spontaneity. He had feared that sort of thing in other cases, and his fears had been justified; for, though he was an artist to the essence, the modern reactionary nymph, with the brambles of the woodland caught in her folds and a look as if the satyrs had toyed with her hair, made him shrink, not as a man of starch and patent leather, but as a man potentially himself a poet or even a faun. The girl was really more candid than her costume, and the best proof of it was her supposing her liberal character suited by any uniform. This was a fallacy, since if she was draped as a pessimist he was sure she liked the taste of life. He thanked her for her appreciation—aware at the same time that he didn't appear to thank her enough and that she might think him ungracious. He was afraid she would ask him to explain something he had written, and he always winced at that—perhaps too timidly—for to his own ear the explanation of a work of art sounded fatuous. But he liked her so much as to feel a confidence that in the long run he should be able to show her he wasn't rudely evasive. Moreover, she surely wasn't quick to take offense, wasn't irritable; she could be trusted to wait. So when he said to her, "Ah, don't talk of anything I've done, don't talk of it *here*; there's another man in the house who's the actuality!"—when he uttered this short sincere protest it was with the sense that *she* would see in the words neither mock humility nor the *impatience* of a successful man bored with praise.

"You mean Mr. St. George—isn't he delightful?"

Paul Overt met her eyes, which had a cool morning light

that would have half broken his heart if he hadn't been so young. "Alas, I don't know him. I only admire him at a distance."

"Oh, you *must* know him—he wants so to talk to you," returned Miss Fancourt, who evidently had the habit of saying the things that, by her quick calculation, would give people pleasure. Paul saw how she would always calculate on everything's being simple between others.

"I shouldn't have supposed he knew anything about me," he professed.

"He does then—everything. And if he didn't I should be able to tell him."

"To tell him everything?" our friend smiled.

"You talk just like the people in your book," she answered.

"Then they must all talk alike."

She thought a moment, not a bit disconcerted. "Well, it must be so difficult. Mr. St. George tells me it *is*—terribly. I've tried too—and I find it so. I've tried to write a novel."

"Mr. St. George oughtn't to discourage you," Paul went so far as to say.

"You do much more—when you wear that expression."

"Well, after all, why try to be an artist?" the young man pursued. "It's so poor—so poor!"

"I don't know what you mean," said Miss Fancourt, who looked grave.

"I mean as compared with being a person of action—as living your works."

"But what's art but an intense life—if it be real?" she asked. "I think it's the only one—everything else is so clumsy!" Her companion laughed, and she brought out with her charming serenity what next struck her. "It's so interesting to meet so many celebrated people."

"So I should think—but surely it isn't new to you."

"Why, I've never seen anyone—anyone: living always in Asia."

The way she talked of Asia somehow enchanted him. "But doesn't that continent swarm with great figures? Haven't you

administered provinces in India and had captive rajahs and tributary princes chained to your car?"

It was as if she didn't care even *should* he amuse himself at her cost. "I was with my father, after I left school to go out there. It was delightful being with him—we're alone together in the world, he and I—but there was none of the society I like best. One never heard of a picture—never of a book, except bad ones."

"Never of a picture? Why, wasn't all life a picture?"

She looked over the delightful place where they sat. "Nothing to compare to this. I adore England!" she cried.

It fairly stirred in him the sacred chord. "Ah, of course I don't deny that we must do something with her, poor old dear, yet!"

"She hasn't been touched, really," said the girl.

"Did Mr. St. George say that?"

There was a small and, as he felt, harmless spark of irony in his question; which, however, she answered very simply, not noticing the insinuation. "Yes, he says England hasn't been touched—not considering all there is," she went on eagerly. "He's so interesting about our country. To listen to him makes one want so to do something."

"It would make *me* want to," said Paul Overt, feeling strongly, on the instant, the suggestion of what she said and that of the emotion with which she said it, and well aware of what an incentive, on St. George's lips, such a speech might be.

"Oh, you—as if you hadn't! I should like so to hear you talk together," she added ardently.

"That's very genial of you; but he'd have it all his own way. I'm prostrate before him."

She had an air of earnestness. "Do you think, then, he's so perfect?"

"Far from it. Some of his later books *seem* to me of a queerness——!"

"Yes, yes—he knows that."

Paul Overt stared. "That they seem to me of a queerness——?"

"Well, yes, or at any rate that they're not what they should be. He told me he didn't esteem them. He has told me such wonderful things—he's so interesting."

There was a certain shock for Paul Overt in the knowledge that the fine genius they were talking of had been reduced to so explicit a confession and had made it, in his misery, to the first comer; for though Miss Fancourt was charming what was she after all but an immature girl encountered at a country house? Yet precisely this was part of the sentiment he himself had just expressed: he would make way completely for the poor peccable great man, not because he didn't read him clear, but altogether because he did. His consideration was half composed of tenderness for superficialities which he was sure their perpetrator judged privately, judged more ferociously than anyone, and which represented some tragic intellectual secret. He would have his reasons for his psychology *à fleur de peau*, and these reasons could only be cruel ones, such as would make him dearer to those who already were fond of him. "You excite my envy. I have my reserves, I discriminate—but I love him," Paul said in a moment. "And seeing him for the first time this way is a great event for me."

"How momentous—how magnificent!" cried the girl. "How delicious to bring you together!"

"*Your* doing it—that makes it perfect," our friend returned.

"He's as eager as you," she went on. "But it's so odd you shouldn't have met."

"It's not really so odd as it strikes you. I've been out of England so much—made repeated absences all these last years."

She took this in with interest. "And yet you write of it as well as if you were always here."

"It's just the being away perhaps. At any rate the best bits, I suspect, are those that were done in dreary places abroad."

"And why were they dreary?"

"Because they were health resorts—where my poor mother was dying."

"Your poor mother?"—she was all sweet wonder.

"We went from place to place to help her to get better. But

she never did. To the deadly Riviera (I hate it!), to the high Alps, to Algiers, and far away—a hideous journey—to Colorado.”

“And she isn’t better?” Miss Fancourt went on.

“She died a year ago.”

“Really?—like mine! Only that’s years since. Some day you must tell me about your mother,” she added.

He could at first, on this, only gaze at her. “What right things you say! If you say them to St. George I don’t wonder he’s in bondage.”

It pulled her up for a moment. “I don’t know what you mean. He doesn’t make speeches and professions at all—he isn’t ridiculous.”

“I’m afraid you consider, then, that I am.”

“No, I don’t”—she spoke it rather shortly. And then she added: “He understands—understands everything.”

The young man was on the point of saying jocosely: “And I don’t—is that it?” But these words, in time, changed themselves to others slightly less trivial. “Do you suppose he understands his wife?”

Miss Fancourt made no direct answer, but after a moment’s hesitation put it: “Isn’t she charming?”

“Not in the least!”

“Here he comes. Now you must know him,” she went on. A small group of visitors had gathered at the other end of the gallery and had been there overtaken by Henry St. George, who strolled in from a neighboring room. He stood near them a moment, not falling into the talk but taking up an old miniature from a table and vaguely regarding it. At the end of a minute he became aware of Miss Fancourt and her companion in the distance; whereupon, laying down his miniature, he approached them with the same procrastinating air, his hands in his pockets and his eyes turned, right and left, to the pictures. The gallery was so long that this transit took ~~some~~ little time, especially as there was a moment when he ~~stopped to~~ admire the fine Gainsborough. “He says Mrs. St. George ~~has~~ been the making of him,” the girl continued in a voice slightly lowered.

"Ah, he's often obscure!" Paul laughed.

"Obscure?" she repeated as if she heard it for the first time. Her eyes rested on her other friend, and it wasn't lost upon Paul that they appeared to send out great shafts of softness. "He's going to speak to us!" she fondly breathed. There was a sort of rapture in her voice, and our friend was startled. "Bless my soul, does she care for him like *that*?—is she in love with him?" he mentally inquired. "Didn't I tell you he was eager?" she had meanwhile asked of him.

"It's eagerness dissimulated," the young man returned as the subject of their observation lingered before his Gainsborough. "He edges toward us shyly. Does he mean that she saved him by burning that book?"

"That book? what book did she burn?" The girl quickly turned her face to him.

"Hasn't he told you, then?"

"Not a word."

"Then he doesn't tell you everything!" Paul had guessed that she pretty much supposed he did. The great man had now resumed his course and come nearer; in spite of which his more qualified admirer risked a profane observation. "St. George and the Dragon is what the anecdote suggests!"

His companion, however, didn't hear it; she smiled at the dragon's adversary. "He *is* eager—he is!" she insisted.

"Eager for you—yes."

But meanwhile she had called out: "I'm sure you want to know Mr. Overt. You'll be great friends, and it will always be delightful to me to remember I was here when you first met and that I had something to do with it."

There was a freshness of intention in the words that carried them off; nevertheless our young man was sorry for Henry St. George, as he was sorry at any time for any person publicly invited to be responsive and delightful. He would have been so touched to believe that a man he deeply admired should care a straw for him that he wouldn't play with such a presumption if it were possibly vain. In a single glance of the eye of the pardonable master he read—having the sort of divination that

belonged to his talent—that this personage had ever a store of friendly patience, which was part of his rich outfit, but was versed in no printed page of a rising scribbler. There was even a relief, a simplification, in that: liking him so much already for what he had done, how could one have liked him any more for a perception which must at the best have been vague? Paul Overt got up, trying to show his compassion, but at the same instant he found himself encompassed by St. George's happy personal art—a manner of which it was the essence to conjure away false positions. It all took place in a moment. Paul was conscious that he knew him now, conscious of his handshake and of the very quality of his hand; of his face, seen nearer and consequently seen better, of a general fraternizing assurance, and in particular of the circumstance that St. George didn't dislike him (as yet at least) for being imposed by a charming but too gushing girl, attractive enough without such dangles. No irritation at any rate was reflected in the voice with which he questioned Miss Fancourt as to some project of a walk—a general walk of the company round the park. He had soon said something to Paul about a talk—"We must have a tremendous lot of talk; there are so many things, aren't there?"—but our friend could see this idea wouldn't in the present case take very immediate effect. All the same he was extremely happy, even after the matter of the walk had been settled—the three presently passed back to the other part of the gallery, where it was discussed with several members of the party; even when, after they had all gone out together, he found himself for half an hour conjoined with Mrs. St. George. Her husband had taken the advance with Miss Fancourt, and this pair were quite out of sight. It was the prettiest of rambles for a summer afternoon—a grassy circuit, of immense extent, skirting the limit of the park within. The park was completely surrounded by its old mottled but perfect red wall, which, all the way on their left, constituted in itself an **object** of interest. Mrs. St. George mentioned to him the **surprising number** of acres thus enclosed, together with numerous **other facts** relating to the property and the family, and the family's **other properties**:

she couldn't too strongly urge on him the importance of seeing their other houses. She ran over the names of these and rang the changes on them with the facility of practice, making them appear an almost endless list. She had received Paul Overt very amiably on his breaking ground with her by the mention of his joy in having just made her husband's acquaintance, and struck him as so alert and so accommodating a little woman that he was rather ashamed of his *mot* about her to Miss Fancourt; though he reflected that a hundred other people, on a hundred occasions, would have been sure to make it. He got on with Mrs. St. George, in short, better than he expected; but this didn't prevent her suddenly becoming aware that she was faint with fatigue and must take her way back to the house by the shortest cut. She professed that she hadn't the strength of a kitten and was a miserable wreck; a character he had been too preoccupied to discern in her while he wondered in what sense she could be held to have been the making of her husband. He had arrived at a glimmering of the answer when she announced that she must leave him, though this perception was of course provisional. While he was in the very act of placing himself at her disposal for the return, the situation underwent a change; Lord Masham had suddenly turned up, coming back to them, overtaking them, emerging from the shrubbery—Overt could scarcely have said how he appeared—and Mrs. St. George had protested that she wanted to be left alone and not to break up the party. A moment later she was walking off with Lord Masham. Our friend fell back and joined Lady Watermouth, to whom he presently mentioned that Mrs. St. George had been obliged to renounce the attempt to go further.

"She oughtn't to have come out at all," her ladyship rather grumpily remarked.

"Is she so very much of an invalid?"

"Very bad indeed." And his hostess added with still greater austerity: "She oughtn't really to come to one!" He wondered what was implied by this, and presently gathered that it was not a reflection on the lady's conduct or her moral nature: it only represented that her strength was not equal to her aspirations.

III

The smoking room at Summersoft was on the scale of the rest of the place—high, light, commodious, and decorated with such refined old carvings and moldings that it seemed rather a bower for ladies who should sit at work at fading crewels than a parliament of gentlemen smoking strong cigars. The gentlemen mustered there in considerable force on the Sunday evening, collecting mainly at one end, in front of one of the cool, fair fireplaces of white marble, the entablature of which was adorned with a delicate little Italian "subject." There was another in the wall that faced it, and, thanks to the mild summer night, a fire in neither; but a nucleus for aggregation was furnished on one side by a table in the chimney corner laden with bottles, decanters, and tall tumblers. Paul Overt was a faithless smoker; he would puff a cigarette for reasons with which tobacco had nothing to do. This was particularly the case on the occasion of which I speak; his motive was the vision of a little direct talk with Henry St. George. The "tremendous" communion of which the great man had held out hopes to him earlier in the day had not yet come off, and this saddened him considerably, for the party was to go its several ways immediately after breakfast on the morrow. He had, however, the disappointment of finding that apparently the author of *Shadowmere* was not disposed to prolong his vigil. He wasn't among the gentlemen assembled when Paul entered, nor was he one of those who turned up, in bright habiliments, during the next ten minutes. The young man waited a little, wondering if he had only gone to put on something extraordinary; this would account for his delay as well as contribute further to Overt's impression of his tendency to do the approved superficial thing. But he didn't arrive—he must have been putting on something more extraordinary than was probable. Our hero gave him up, feeling a little injured, a little wounded, at this loss of twenty coveted words. He wasn't angry, but he puffed his cigarette sighingly, with the sense of something rare possibly missed. He wandered away with his regret and moved slowly round the room, looking

at the old prints on the walls. In this attitude he presently felt a hand on his shoulder and a friendly voice in his ear: "This is good. I hoped I should find you. I came down on purpose." St. George was there without a change of dress and with a fine face—his graver one—to which our young man all in a flutter responded. He explained that it was only for the Master—the idea of a little talk—that he had sat up, and that, not finding him, he had been on the point of going to bed.

"Well, you know, I don't smoke—my wife doesn't let me," said St. George, looking for a place to sit down. "It's very good for me—very good for me. Let us take that sofa."

"Do you mean smoking's good for you?"

"No, no—her not letting me. It's a great thing to have a wife who's so sure of all the things one can do without. One might never find them out oneself. She doesn't allow me to touch a cigarette." They took possession of a sofa at a distance from the group of smokers, and St. George went on: "Have you got one yourself?"

"Do you mean a cigarette?"

"Dear no—a wife!"

"No; and yet I'd give up my cigarette for one."

"You'd give up a good deal more than that," St. George returned. "However, you'd get a great deal in return. There's a something to be said for wives," he added, folding his arms and crossing his outstretched legs. He declined tobacco altogether and sat there without returning fire. His companion stopped smoking, touched by his courtesy; and after all they were out of the fumes, their sofa was in a faraway corner. It would have been a mistake, St. George went on, a great mistake for them to have separated without a little chat; "for I know all about you," he said, "I know you're very remarkable. You've written a very distinguished book."

"And how do you know it?" Paul asked.

"Why, my dear fellow, it's in the air, it's in the papers, it's everywhere." St. George spoke with the immediate familiarity of a confrere—a tone that seemed to his neighbor the very rustle of the laurel. "You're on all men's lips and,

what's better, on all women's. And I've just been reading your book."

"Just? You hadn't read it this afternoon," said Overt.

"How do you know that?"

"I think you should know how I know it," the young man laughed.

"I suppose Miss Fancourt told you."

"No indeed—she led me rather to suppose you had."

"Yes—that's much more what she'd do. Doesn't she shed a rosy glow over life? But you didn't believe her?" asked St. George.

"No, not when you came to us there."

"Did I pretend? did I pretend badly?" But without waiting for an answer to this St. George went on: "You ought always to believe such a girl as that—always, always. Some women are meant to be taken with allowances and reserves; but you must take *her* just as she is."

"I like her very much," said Paul Overt.

Something in his tone appeared to excite on his companion's part a momentary sense of the absurd; perhaps it was the air of deliberation attending this judgment. St. George broke into a laugh to reply. "It's the best thing you can do with her. She's a rare young lady! In point of fact, however, I confess I hadn't read you this afternoon."

"Then you see how right I was in this particular case not to believe Miss Fancourt."

"How right? how can I agree to that when I lost credit by it?"

"Do you wish to pass exactly for what she represents you? Certainly you needn't be afraid," Paul said.

"Ah, my dear young man, don't talk **about** passing—for the likes of me! I'm passing away—nothing **else** than that. She has a better use for her young imagination (isn't it fine?) than in 'representing' in any way such a weary wasted used-up animal!" The Master spoke with a sudden sadness that produced a protest on Paul's part; but before the protest could be uttered he went on, reverting to the latter's striking novel:

"I had no idea you were so good—one hears of so many things. But you're surprisingly good."

"I'm going to be surprisingly better," Overt made bold to reply.

"I see that, and it's what fetches me. I don't see so much else—as one looks about—that's going to be surprisingly better. They're going to be consistently worse—most of the things. It's so much easier to be worse—heaven knows I've found it so. I'm not in a great glow, you know, about what's breaking out all over the place. But you *must* be better, you really must keep it up. I haven't, of course. It's very difficult—that's the devil of the whole thing, keeping it up. But I see you'll be able to. It will be a great disgrace if you don't."

"It's very interesting to hear you speak of yourself; but I don't know what you mean by your allusions to your having fallen off," Paul Overt observed with pardonable hypocrisy. He liked his companion so much now that the fact of any decline of talent or of care had ceased for the moment to be vivid to him.

"Don't say that—don't say that," St. George returned gravely, his head resting on the top of the sofa back and his eyes on the ceiling. "You know perfectly what I mean. I haven't read twenty pages of your book without seeing that you can't help it."

"You make me very miserable," Paul ecstatically breathed.

"I'm glad of that, for it may serve as a kind of warning. Shocking enough it must be, especially to a young fresh mind, full of faith—the spectacle of a man meant for better things sunk at my age in such dishonor." St. George, in the same contemplative attitude, spoke softly but deliberately, and without perceptible emotion. His tone indeed suggested an impersonal lucidity that was practically cruel—cruel to himself—and made his young friend lay an argumentative hand on his arm. But he went on while his eyes seemed to follow the graces of the eighteenth-century ceiling: "Look at me well, take my lesson to heart—for it *is* a lesson. Let that good come of it at least that you shudder with your pitiful impression, and

that this may help to keep you straight in the future. Don't become in your old age what I have in mine—the depressing, the deplorable illustration of the worship of false gods!”

“What do you mean by your old age?” the young man asked.

“It has made me old. But I like your youth.”

Paul answered nothing—they sat for a minute in silence. They heard the others going on about the governmental majority. Then “What do you mean by false gods?” he inquired.

His companion had no difficulty whatever in saying, “The idols of the market; money and luxury and ‘the world’; placing one’s children and dressing one’s wife; everything that drives one to the short and easy way. Ah, the vile things they make one do!”

“But surely one’s right to want to place one’s children.”

“One has no business to have any children,” St. George placidly declared. “I mean, of course, if one wants to do anything good.”

“But aren’t they an inspiration—an incentive?”

“An incentive to damnation, artistically speaking.”

“You touch on very deep things—things I should like to discuss with you,” Paul said. “I should like you to tell me volumes about yourself. This is a great feast for *me*!”

“Of course it is, cruel youth. But to show you I’m still not incapable, degraded as I am, of an act of faith, I’ll tie my vanity to the stake for you and burn it to ashes. You must come and see me—you must come and see us,” the Master quickly substituted. “Mrs. St. George is charming; I don’t know whether you’ve had any opportunity to talk with her. She’ll be delighted to see you; she likes great celebrities, whether incipient or predominant. You must come and dine—my wife will write to you. Where are you to be found?”

“This is my little address”—and Overt drew out his pocket-book and extracted a visiting card. On second thoughts, however, he kept it back, remarking that he wouldn’t trouble his friend to take charge of it but would come and see him straightway in London and leave it at his door if he should fail to obtain entrance.

"Ah, you'll probably fail; my wife's always out—or when she isn't out is knocked up from having *been* out. You must come and dine—though that won't do much good either, for my wife insists on big dinners." St. George turned it over further, but then went on: "You must come down and see us in the country, that's the best way; we've plenty of room and it isn't bad."

"You've a house in the country?" Paul asked enviously.

"Ah, not like this! But we have a sort of place we go to—an hour from Euston. That's one of the reasons."

"One of the reasons?"

"Why my books are so bad."

"You must tell me all the others!" Paul longingly laughed.

His friend made no direct rejoinder to this, but spoke again abruptly. "Why have I never seen you before?"

The tone of the question was singularly flattering to our hero, who felt it to imply the great man's now perceiving he had for years missed something. "Partly, I suppose, because there has been no particular reason why you should see me. I haven't lived in the world—in your world. I've spent many years out of England, in different places abroad."

"Well, please don't do it any more. You must do England—there's such a lot of it."

"Do you mean I must write about it?"—and Paul struck the note of the listening candor of a child.

"Of course you must. And tremendously well, do you mind? That takes off a little of my esteem for this thing of yours—that it goes on abroad. Hang 'abroad'! Stay at home and do things here—do subjects we can measure."

"I'll do whatever you tell me," Overt said, deeply attentive. "But pardon me if I say I don't understand how you've been reading my book," he added. "I've had you before me all the afternoon, first in that long walk, then at tea on the lawn, till we went to dress for dinner, and all the evening at dinner and in this place."

St. George turned his face about with a smile. "I gave it but a quarter of an hour."

"A quarter of an hour's immense, but I don't understand where you put it in. In the drawing room after dinner you weren't reading—you were talking to Miss Fancourt."

"It comes to the same thing, because we talked about *Ginistrella*. She described it to me—she lent me her copy."

"Lent it to you?"

"She travels with it."

"It's incredible," Paul blushed.

"It's glorious for you, but it also turned out very well for me. When the ladies went off to bed she kindly offered to send the book down to me. Her maid brought it to me in the hall, and I went to my room with it. I hadn't thought of coming here, I do that so little. But I don't sleep early, I always have to read an hour or two. I sat down to your novel on the spot, without undressing, without taking off anything but my coat. I think that's a sign my curiosity had been strongly aroused about it. I read a quarter of an hour, as I tell you, and even in a quarter of an hour I was greatly struck."

"Ah, the beginning isn't very good—it's the whole thing!" said Overt, who had listened to this recital with extreme interest. "And you laid down the book and came after me?" he asked.

"That's the way it moved me. I said to myself, 'I see it's off his own bat, and he's there, by the way, and the day's over, and I haven't said twenty words to him.' It occurred to me that you'd probably be in the smoking room and that it wouldn't be too late to repair my omission. I wanted to do something civil to you, so I put on my coat and came down. I shall read your book again when I go up."

Our friend faced round in his place—he was touched as he had scarce ever been by the picture of such a demonstration in his favor. "You're really the kindest of men. *Cela s'est passé comme ça?*—and I've been sitting here with you all this time and never apprehended it and never thanked you!"

"Thank Miss Fancourt—it was she who wound me up. She has made me feel as if I had read your novel."

"She's an angel from heaven!" Paul declared.

"She is indeed. I've never seen anyone like her. Her interest

in literature's touching—something quite peculiar to herself; she takes it all so seriously. She feels the arts and she wants to feel them more. To those who practice them it's almost humiliating—her curiosity, her sympathy, her good faith. How can anything be as fine as she supposes it?"

"She's a rare organization," the younger man sighed.

"The richest I've ever seen—an artistic intelligence really of the first order. And lodged in such a form!" St. George exclaimed.

"One would like to represent such a girl as that," Paul continued.

"Ah, there it is—there's nothing like life!" said his companion. "When you're finished, squeezed dry and used up and you think the sack's empty, you're still appealed to, you still get touches and thrills, the idea springs up—out of the lap of the actual—and shows you there's always something to be done. But I shan't do it—she's not for me!"

"How do you mean, not for you?"

"Oh, it's all over—she's for you, if you like."

"Ah, much less!" said Paul. "She's not for a dingy little man of letters; she's for the world, the bright, rich world of bribes and rewards. And the world will take hold of her—it will carry her away."

"It will try—but it's just a case in which there may be a fight. It would be worth fighting, for a man who had it in him, with youth and talent on his side."

These words rang not a little in Paul Overt's consciousness—they held him briefly silent. "It's a wonder she has remained as she is; giving herself away so—with so much to give away."

"Remaining, you mean, so ingenuous—so natural? Oh, she doesn't care a straw—she gives away because she overflows. She has her own feelings, her own standards; she doesn't keep remembering that she must be proud. And then she hasn't been here long enough to be spoiled; she has picked up a fashion or two, but only the amusing ones. She's a provincial—a provincial of genius," St. George went on; "her very blunders are charming, her mistakes are interesting. She has come back

from Asia with all sorts of excited curiosities and unappeased appetites. She's first rate herself and she expends herself on the second rate. She's life herself and she takes a rare interest in imitations. She mixes all things up, but there are none in regard to which she hasn't perceptions. She sees things in a perspective—as if from the top of the Himalayas—and she enlarges everything she touches. Above all she exaggerates—to herself, I mean. She exaggerates you and me!"

There was nothing in that description to allay the agitation caused in our younger friend by such a sketch of a fine subject. It seemed to him to show the art of St. George's admired hand, and he lost himself in gazing at the vision—this hovered there before him—of a woman's figure which should be part of the glory of a novel. But at the end of a moment the thing had turned into smoke, and out of the smoke—the last puff of a big cigar—proceeded the voice of General Fancourt, who had left the others and come and planted himself before the gentlemen on the sofa. "I suppose that when you fellows get talking you sit up half the night."

"Half the night?—*jamais de la vie!* I follow a hygiene"—and St. George rose to his feet.

"I see—you're hothouse plants," laughed the General. "That's the way you produce your flowers."

"I produce mine between ten and one every morning—I bloom with a regularity!" St. George went on.

"And with a splendor!" added the polite General, while Paul noted how little the author of *Shadowmere* minded, as he phrased it to himself, when addressed as a celebrated storyteller. The young man had an idea *he* should never get used to that; it would always make him uncomfortable—from the suspicion that people would think they had to—and he would want to prevent it. Evidently his great colleague had toughened and hardened—had made himself a surface. The group of men had finished their cigars and taken up their bedroom candlesticks; but before they all passed out Lord Watermouth invited the pair of guests who had been so absorbed together to "have" something. It happened that they both declined; upon which Gen-

eral Fancourt said: "Is that the hygiene? You don't water the flowers?"

"Oh, I should drown them!" St. George replied; but, leaving the room still at his young friend's side, he added whimsically, for the latter's benefit, in a lower tone: "My wife doesn't let me."

"Well, I'm glad I'm not one of you fellows!" the General richly concluded.

The nearness of Summersoft to London had this consequence, chilling to a person who had had a vision of sociability in a railway carriage, that most of the company, after breakfast, drove back to town, entering their own vehicles, which had come out to fetch them, while their servants returned by train with their luggage. Three or four young men, among whom was Paul Overt, also availed themselves of the common convenience; but they stood in the portico of the house and saw the others roll away. Miss Fancourt got into a victoria with her father after she had shaken hands with our hero and said, smiling in the frankest way in the world, "*I must see you more. Mrs. St. George is so nice; she has promised to ask us both to dinner together.*" This lady and her husband took their places in a perfectly appointed brougham—she required a closed carriage—and as our young man waved his hat to them in response to their nods and flourishes he reflected that, taken together, they were an honorable image of success, of the material rewards and the social credit of literature. Such things were not the full measure, but he nevertheless felt a little proud for literature.

IV

Before a week had elapsed he met Miss Fancourt in Bond Street, at a private view of the works of a young artist in "black-and-white" who had been so good as to invite him to the stuffy scene. The drawings were admirable, but the crowd in the one little room was so dense that he felt himself up to his neck in a sack of wool. A fringe of people at the outer edge endeavored by curving forward their backs and presenting, below them, a still more convex surface of resistance to the pressure

of the mass, to preserve an interval between their noses and the glazed mounts of the pictures; while the central body, in the comparative gloom projected by a wide horizontal screen hung under the skylight and allowing only a margin for the day, remained upright, dense, and vague, lost in the contemplation of its own ingredients. This contemplation sat especially in the sad eyes of certain female heads, surmounted with hats of strange convolution and plumage, which rose on long necks above the others. One of the heads, Paul perceived, was much the most beautiful of the collection, and his next discovery was that it belonged to Miss Fancourt. Its beauty was enhanced by the glad smile she sent him across surrounding obstructions, a smile that drew him to her as fast as he could make his way. He had seen for himself at Summersoft that the last thing her nature contained was an affectation of indifference; yet even with this circumspection he took a fresh satisfaction in her not having pretended to await his arrival with composure. She smiled as radiantly as if she wished to make him hurry, and as soon as he came within earshot she broke out in her voice of joy: "He's here—he's here; he's coming back in a moment!"

"Ah, your father?" Paul returned as she offered him her hand.

"Oh, dear no, this isn't in my poor father's line. I mean Mr. St. George. He has just left me to speak to someone—he's coming back. It's he who brought me—wasn't it charming?"

"Ah that gives him a pull over me—I couldn't have 'brought' you, could I?"

"If you had been so kind as to propose it—**why** not you as well as he?" the girl returned with a face that, **expressing** no cheap coquetry, simply affirmed a happy fact.

"Why he's a *père de famille*. They've privileges," Paul explained. And then quickly: "Will you go to see places with *me*?" he asked.

"Anything you like," she smiled. "I know what you mean, that girls have to have a lot of people——!" Then she broke off: "I don't know; I'm free. I've always been like that—I can go about with anyone. I'm so glad to meet you," she added with a sweet distinctness that made those near her turn round.

"Let me at least repay that speech by taking you out of this squash," her friend said. "Surely people aren't happy here!"

"No, they're awfully *mornes*, aren't they? But I'm very happy indeed and I promised Mr. St. George to remain on this spot till he comes back. He's going to take me away. They send him invitations for things of this sort—more than he wants. It was so kind of him to think of me."

"They also send me invitations of this kind—more than I want. And if thinking of *you* will do it——!" Paul went on.

"Oh, I delight in them—everything that's life, everything that's London!"

"They don't have private views in Asia, I suppose," he laughed. "But what a pity that for this year, even in this gorged city, they're pretty well over."

"Well, next year will do, for I hope you believe we're going to be friends always. Here he comes!" Miss Fancourt continued before Paul had time to respond.

He made out St. George in the gaps of the crowd, and this perhaps led to his hurrying a little to say: "I hope that doesn't mean I'm to wait till next year to see you."

"No, no—aren't we to meet at dinner on the twenty-fifth?" she panted with an eagerness as happy as his own.

"That's almost next year. Is there no means of seeing you before?"

She stared with all her brightness. "Do you mean you'd *come*?"

"Like a shot, if you'll be so good as to ask me!"

"On Sunday then—this next Sunday?"

"What have I done that you should doubt it?" the young man asked with delight.

Miss Fancourt turned instantly to St. George, who had now joined them, and announced triumphantly: "He's coming on Sunday—this next Sunday!"

"Ah, my day—my day too!" said the famous novelist, laughing, to their companion.

"Yes, but not yours only. You shall meet in Manchester Square; you shall talk—you shall be wonderful!"

"We don't meet often enough," St. George allowed, shaking hands with his disciple. "Too many things—ah, too many things! But we must make it up in the country in September. You won't forget you've promised me that?"

"Why, he's coming on the twenty-fifth—you'll see him then," said the girl.

"On the twenty-fifth?" St. George asked vaguely.

"We dine with you; I hope you haven't forgotten. He's dining out that day," she added gaily to Paul.

"Oh, bless me, yes—that's charming! And you're coming? My wife didn't tell me," St. George said to him. "Too many things—too many things!" he repeated.

"Too many people—too many people!" Paul exclaimed, giving ground before the penetration of an elbow.

"You oughtn't to say that. They all read you."

"Me? I should like to see them! Only two or three at most," the young man returned.

"Did you ever hear anything like that? He knows, haughtily, how good he is!" St. George declared, laughing, to Miss Fancourt. "They read *me*, but that doesn't make me like them any better. Come away from them, come away!" And he led the way out of the exhibition.

"He's going to take me to the Park," Miss Fancourt observed to Overt with elation as they passed along the corridor that led to the street.

"Ah, does he go there?" Paul asked, taking the fact for a somewhat unexpected illustration of St. George's *mœurs*.

"It's a beautiful day—there'll be a great crowd. We're going to look at the people, to look at types," the girl went on. "We shall sit under the trees; we shall walk by the Row."

"I go once a year—on business," said St. George, who had overheard Paul's question.

"Or with a country cousin, didn't you tell me? I'm the country cousin!" she continued over her shoulder to Paul as their friend drew her toward a hansom to which he had signaled. The young man watched them get in; he returned, as he stood there, the friendly wave of the hand with which,

ensconced in the vehicle beside her, St. George took leave of him. He even lingered to see the vehicle start away and lose itself in the confusion of Bond Street. He followed it with his eyes; it put to him embarrassing things. "She's not for *me*!" the great novelist had said emphatically at Summersoft; but his manner of conducting himself toward her appeared not quite in harmony with such a conviction. How could he have behaved differently if she *had* been for him? An indefinite envy rose in Paul Overt's heart as he took his way on foot alone; a feeling addressed alike, strangely enough, to each of the occupants of the hansom. How much he should like to rattle about London with such a girl! How much he should like to go and look at "types" with St. George!

The next Sunday at four o'clock he called in Manchester Square, where his secret wish was gratified by his finding Miss Fancourt alone. She was in a large, bright, friendly, occupied room, which was painted red all over, draped with the quaint, cheap, florid stuffs that are represented as coming from southern and eastern countries, where they are fabled to serve as the counterpanes of the peasantry, and bedecked with pottery of vivid hues, ranged on casual shelves, and with many water-color drawings from the hand (as the visitor learned) of the young lady herself, commemorating with a brave breadth the sunsets, the mountains, the temples, and palaces of India. He sat an hour—more than an hour, two hours—and all the while no one came in. His hostess was so good as to remark, with her liberal humanity, that it was delightful they weren't interrupted: it was so rare in London, especially at that season, that people got a good talk. But luckily now, of a fine Sunday, half the world went out of town, and that made it better for those who didn't go, when these others were in sympathy. It was the defect of London—one of two or three, the very short list of those she recognized in the teeming world city she adored—that there were too few good chances for talk: you never had time to carry anything far.

"Too many things, too many things!" Paul said, quoting St. George's exclamation of a few days before.

"Ah, yes, for him there are too many—his life's too complicated."

"Have you seen it *near*? That's what I should like to do; it might explain some mysteries," her visitor went on. She asked him what mysteries he meant, and he said: "Oh, peculiarities of his work, inequalities, superficialities. For one who looks at it from the artistic point of view it contains a bottomless ambiguity."

She became at this, on the spot, all intensity. "Ah, do describe that more—it's so interesting. There are no such suggestive questions. I'm so fond of them. He thinks he's a failure—fancy!" she beautifully wailed.

"That depends on what his ideal may have been. With his gifts it ought to have been high. But till one knows what he really proposed to himself——! Do *you* know by chance?" the young man broke off.

"Oh, he doesn't talk to me about himself. I can't make him. It's too provoking."

Paul was on the point of asking what, then, he did talk about, but discretion checked it and he said instead: "Do you think he's unhappy at home?"

She seemed to wonder. "At home?"

"I mean in his relations with his wife. He has a mystifying little way of alluding to her."

"Not to me," said Marian Fancourt with her clear eyes. "That wouldn't be right, would it?" she asked gravely.

"Not particularly; so I'm glad he doesn't mention her to you. To praise her might bore you, and he has no business to do anything else. Yet he knows you better than me."

"Ah, but he respects *you*!" the girl cried as with envy.

Her visitor stared a moment, then broke into a laugh. "Doesn't he respect you?"

"Of course, but not in the same way. He respects what you've done—he told me so the other day."

Paul drank it in, but retained his faculties. "When you went to look at types?"

"Yes—we found so many: he has such an observation of

them! He talked a great deal about your book. He says it's really important."

"Important! Ah the grand creature!"—and the author of the work in question groaned for joy.

"He was wonderfully amusing, he was inexpressibly droll, while we walked about. He sees everything; he has so many comparisons and images, and they're always exactly right. *C'est d'un trouvé*, as they say!"

"Yes, with his gifts, such things as he ought to have done!" Paul sighed.

"And don't you think he *has* done them?"

Ah, it was just the point. "A part of them, and of course even that part's immense. But he might have been one of the greatest. However, let us not make this an hour of qualifications. Even as they stand," our friend earnestly concluded, "his writings are a mine of gold."

To this proposition she ardently responded, and for half an hour the pair talked over the Master's principal productions. She knew them well—she knew them even better than her visitor, who was struck with her critical intelligence and with something large and bold in the movement in her mind. She said things that startled him and that evidently had come to her directly; they weren't picked-up phrases—she placed them too well. St. George had been right about her being first rate, about her not being afraid to gush, not remembering that she must be proud. Suddenly something came back to her, and she said: "I recollect that he did speak of Mrs. St. George to me once. He said, apropos of something or other, that she didn't care for perfection."

"That's a great crime in an artist's wife," Paul returned.

"Yes, poor thing!" and the girl sighed with a suggestion of many reflections, some of them mitigating. But she presently added: "Ah perfection, perfection—how one ought to go in for it! I wish *I* could."

"Everyone can in his way," her companion opined.

"In *his* way, yes—but not in hers. Women are so hampered—so condemned! Yet it's a kind of dishonor if you don't.

when you want to *do* something, isn't it?" Miss Fancourt pursued, dropping one train in her quickness to take up another, an accident that was common with her. So these two young persons sat discussing high themes in their eclectic drawing room, in their London "season"—discussing, with extreme seriousness, the high theme of perfection. It must be said in extenuation of this eccentricity that they were interested in the business. Their tone had truth and their emotion beauty; they weren't posturing for each other or for someone else.

The subject was so wide that they found themselves reducing it; the perfection to which for the moment they agreed to confine their speculations was that of the valid, the exemplary work of art. Our young woman's imagination, it appeared, had wandered far in that direction, and her guest had the rare delight of feeling in their conversation a full interchange. This episode will have lived for years in his memory and even in his wonder; it had the quality that fortune distills in a single drop at a time—the quality that lubricates many ensuing frictions. He still, whenever he likes, has a vision of the room, the bright, red, sociable, talkative room with the curtains that, by a stroke of successful audacity, had the note of vivid blue. He remembers where certain things stood, the particular book open on the table and the almost intense odor of the flowers placed, at the left, somewhere behind him. These facts were the fringe, as it were, of a fine special agitation which had its birth in those two hours and of which perhaps the main sign was in its leading him inwardly and repeatedly to breathe, "I had no idea there was anyone like this—I had no idea there was anyone like this!" Her freedom amazed him and charmed him—it seemed so to simplify the practical question. She was on the footing of an independent personage—a motherless girl who had passed out of her teens and had a position **and** responsibilities, who wasn't held down to the limitations of **a** little miss. She came and went with no dragged duenna, she received people alone, and, though she was totally without hardness, the question of protection or patronage had no relevancy in regard to her. She gave such an impression of the clear and the noble

combined with the easy and the natural that in spite of her eminent modern situation she suggested no sort of sisterhood with the "fast" girl. Modern she was indeed, and made Paul Overt, who loved old color, the golden glaze of time, think with some alarm of the muddled palette of the future. He couldn't get used to her interest in the arts he cared for; it seemed too good to be real—it was so unlikely an adventure to tumble into such a well of sympathy. One might stray into the desert easily—that was on the cards and that was the law of life; but it was too rare an accident to stumble on a crystal well. Yet if her aspirations seemed at one moment too extravagant to be real they struck him at the next as too intelligent to be false. They were both high and lame, and, whims for whims, he preferred them to any he had met in a like relation. It was probable enough she would leave them behind—exchange them for politics or "smartness" or mere prolific maternity, as was the custom of scribbling, daubing, educated, flattered girls in an age of luxury and a society of leisure. He noted that the water colors on the walls of the room she sat in had mainly the quality of being naïves, and reflected that naïveté in art is like a zero in a number: its importance depends on the figure it is united with. Meanwhile, however, he had fallen in love with her. Before he went away, at any rate, he said to her: "I thought St. George was coming to see you today, but he doesn't turn up."

For a moment he supposed she was going to cry "*Comment donc?* Did you come here only to meet him?" But the next he became aware of how little such a speech would have fallen in with any note of flirtation he had as yet perceived in her. She only replied: "Ah, yes, but I don't think he'll come. He recommended me not to expect him." Then she gaily but all gently added: "He said it wasn't fair to you. But I think I could manage two."

"So could I," Paul Overt returned, stretching the point a little to meet her. In reality his appreciation of the occasion was so completely an appreciation of the woman before him that another figure in the scene, even so esteemed a one as

St. George, might for the hour have appealed to him vainly. He left the house wondering what the great man had meant by its not being fair to him; and, still more than that, whether he had actually stayed away from the force of that idea. As he took his course through the Sunday solitude of Manchester Square, swinging his stick and with a good deal of emotion fermenting in his soul, it appeared to him he was living in a world strangely magnanimous. Miss Fancourt had told him it was possible she should be away, and that her father should be, on the following Sunday, but that she had the hope of a visit from him in the other event. She promised to let him know should their absence fail, and then he might act accordingly. After he had passed into one of the streets that open from the Square he stopped, without definite intentions, looking skeptically for a cab. In a moment he saw a hansom roll through the place from the other side and come a part of the way toward him. He was on the point of hailing the driver when he noticed a "fare" within; then he waited, seeing the man prepare to deposit his passenger by pulling up at one of the houses. The house was apparently the one he himself had just quitted; at least he drew that inference as he recognized Henry St. George in the person who stepped out of the hansom. Paul turned off as quickly as if he had been caught in the act of spying. He gave up his cab—he preferred to walk; he would go nowhere else. He was glad St. George hadn't renounced his visit altogether—that would have been too absurd. Yes, the world was magnanimous, and even he himself felt so as, on looking at his watch, he noted but six o'clock, so that he could mentally congratulate his successor on having an hour still to sit in Miss Fancourt's drawing room. He himself might use that hour for another visit, but by the time he reached the Marble Arch the idea of such a course had become incongruous to him. He passed beneath that architectural effort and walked into the Park till he had got upon the spreading grass. Here he continued to walk; he took his way across the elastic turf and came out by the Serpentine. He watched with a friendly eye the diversions of the London people, he bent a glance almost

encouraging on the young ladies paddling their sweethearts about the lake and the guardsmen tickling tenderly with their bearskins the artificial flowers in the Sunday hats of their partners. He prolonged his meditative walk; he went into Kensington Gardens, he sat upon the penny chairs, he looked at the little sailboats launched upon the round pond and was glad he had no engagement to dine. He repaired for this purpose, very late, to his club, where he found himself unable to order a repast and told the waiter to bring whatever there was. He didn't even observe what he was served with, and he spent the evening in the library of the establishment, pretending to read an article in an American magazine. He failed to discover what it was about; it appeared in a dim way to be about Marian Fancourt.

Quite late in the week she wrote to him that she was not to go into the country—it had only just been settled. Her father, she added, would never settle anything, but put it all on her. She felt her responsibility—she had to—and since she was forced this was the way she had decided. She mentioned no reasons, which gave our friend all the clearer field for bold conjecture about them. In Manchester Square on this second Sunday he esteemed his fortune less good, for she had three or four other visitors. But there were three or four compensations; perhaps the greatest of which was that, learning how her father had after all, at the last hour, gone out of town alone, the bold conjecture I just now spoke of found itself becoming a shade more bold. And then her presence was her presence, and the personal red room was there and was full of it, whatever phantoms passed and vanished, emitting incomprehensible sounds. Lastly, he had the resource of staying till everyone had come and gone and of believing this grateful to her, though she gave no particular sign. When they were alone together he came to his point. "But St. George did come—last Sunday. I saw him as I looked back."

"Yes, but it was the last time."

"The last time?"

"He said he would never come again."

Paul Overt stared. "Does he mean he wishes to cease to see you?"

"I don't know what he means," the girl bravely smiled. "He won't at any rate see me here."

"And pray why not?"

"I haven't the least idea," said Marian Fancourt, whose visitor found her more perversely sublime than ever yet as she professed this clear helplessness.

v

"Oh, I say, I want you to stop a little," Henry St. George said to him at eleven o'clock the night he dined with the head of the profession. The company—none of it indeed *of* the profession—had been numerous and was taking its leave; our young man, after bidding good night to his hostess, had put out his hand in farewell to the master of the house. Besides drawing from the latter the protest I have cited, this movement provoked a further priceless word about their chance now to have a talk, their going into his room, his having still everything to say. Paul Overt was all delight at this kindness; nevertheless he mentioned in weak, jocose qualification the bare fact that he had promised to go to another place which was at a considerable distance.

"Well, then, you'll break your promise, that's all. You quite awful humbug!" St. George added in a tone that confirmed our young man's ease.

"Certainly I'll break it—but it was a real promise."

"Do you mean to Miss Fancourt? You're following her?" his friend asked.

He answered by a question. "Oh, is *she* going?"

"Base impostor!" his ironic host went on. "I've treated you handsomely on the article of that young lady: I won't make another concession. Wait three *minutes*—I'll be with you." He gave himself to his departing guests, accompanied the long-trained ladies to the door. It was a hot night, the windows were open, the sound of the quick carriages and of the linkmen's call came into the house. The affair had rather

glittered; a sense of festal things was in the heavy air: not only the influence of that particular entertainment, but the suggestion of the wide hurry of pleasure which in London on summer nights fills so many of the happier quarters of the complicated town. Gradually Mrs. St. George's drawing room emptied itself; Paul was left alone with his hostess, to whom he explained the motive of his waiting. "Ah, yes, some intellectual, some *professional*, talk," she leered; "at this season doesn't one miss it? Poor dear Henry, I'm so glad!" The young man looked out of the window a moment, at the called hansoms that lurched up, at the smooth broughams that rolled away. When he turned round Mrs. St. George had disappeared; her husband's voice rose to him from below—he was laughing and talking, in the portico, with some lady who awaited her carriage. Paul had solitary possession, for some minutes, of the warm deserted rooms where the covered tinted lamplight was soft, the seats had been pushed about, and the odor of flowers lingered. They were large, they were pretty, they contained objects of value; everything in the picture told of a "good house." At the end of five minutes a servant came in with a request from the Master that he would join him downstairs; upon which, descending, he followed his conductor through a long passage to an apartment thrown out, in the rear of the habitation, for the special requirements, as he guessed, of a busy man of letters.

St. George was in his shirt sleeves in the middle of a large high room—a room without windows, but with a wide skylight at the top, that of a place of exhibition. It was furnished as a library, and the serried bookshelves rose to the ceiling, a surface of incomparable tone produced by dimly gilt "backs" interrupted here and there by the suspension of old prints and drawings. At the end furthest from the door of admission was a tall desk, of great extent, at which the person using it could write only in the erect posture of a clerk in a countinghouse; and stretched from the entrance to this structure was a wide plain band of crimson cloth, as straight as a garden path and almost as long, where, in his mind's eye, Paul at once beheld the Master pace to and fro during vexed hours—hours, that is,

of admirable composition. The servant gave him a coat, an old jacket with a hang of experience, from a cupboard in the wall, retiring afterwards with the garment he had taken off. Paul Overt welcomed the coat; it was a coat for talk, it promised confidences—having visibly received so many—and had tragic literary elbows. “Ah, we’re practical—we’re practical!” St. George said as he saw his visitor look the place over. “Isn’t it a good big cage for going round and round? My wife invented it and she locks me up here every morning.”

Our young man breathed—by way of tribute—with a certain oppression. “You don’t miss a window—a place to look out?”

“I did at first awfully; but her calculation was just. It saves time, it has saved me many months in these ten years. Here I stand, under the eye of day—in London of course, very often, it’s rather a bleared old eye—walled in to my trade. I can’t get away—so the room’s a fine lesson in concentration. I’ve learnt the lesson, I think; look at that big bundle of proof and acknowledge it.” He pointed to a fat roll of papers, on one of the tables, which had not been undone.

“Are you bringing out another——?” Paul asked in a tone the fond deficiencies of which he didn’t recognize till his companion burst out laughing, and indeed scarce even then.

“You humbug, you humbug!”—St. George appeared to enjoy caressing him, as it were, with that opprobrium. “Don’t I know what you think of them?” he asked, standing there with his hands in his pockets and with a new kind of smile. It was as if he were going to let his young votary see him all now.

“Upon my word in that case you know more than I do!” the latter ventured to respond, revealing a part of the torment of being able neither clearly to esteem nor distinctly to renounce him.

“My dear fellow,” said the more and more interesting Master, “don’t imagine I talk about my books specifically; they’re not a decent subject—*il ne manquerait plus que ça!* I’m not so bad as you may apprehend. About myself, yes, a little, if you like; though it wasn’t for that I brought you down here. I want to ask you something—very much indeed; I value this chance.

Therefore sit down. We're practical, but there *is* a sofa, you see—for she does humor my poor bones so far. Like all really great administrators and disciplinarians she knows when wisely to relax." Paul sank into the corner of a deep leathern couch, but his friend remained standing and explanatory. "If you don't mind, in this room, this is my habit. From the door to the desk and from the desk to the door. That shakes up my imagination gently; and don't you see what a good thing it is that there's no window for her to fly out of? The eternal standing as I write (I stop at that bureau and put it down, when anything comes, and so we go on) was rather wearisome at first, but we adopted it with an eye to the long run: you're in better order—if your legs don't break down!—and you can keep it up for more years. Oh, we're practical—we're practical!" St. George repeated, going to the table and taking up all mechanically the bundle of proofs. But, pulling off the wrapper, he had a change of attention that appealed afresh to our hero. He lost himself a moment, examining the sheets of his new book, while the younger man's eyes wandered over the room again.

"Lord, what good things I should do if I had such a charming place as this to do them in!" Paul reflected. The outer world, the world of accident and ugliness, was so successfully excluded, and within the rich protecting square, beneath the patronizing sky, the dream-figures, the summoned company, could hold their particular revel. It was a fond prevision of Overt's rather than an observation on actual data, for which occasions had been too few, that the Master thus more closely viewed would have the quality, the charming gift, of flashing out, all surprisingly, in personal intercourse and at moments of suspended or perhaps even of diminished expectation. A happy relation with him would be a thing proceeding by jumps, not by traceable stages.

"Do you read them—really?" he asked, laying down the proofs on Paul's inquiring of him how soon the work would be published. And when the young man answered, "Oh, yes, always," he was moved to mirth again by something he caught in his manner of saying that. "You go to see your grandmother

on her birthday—and very proper it is, especially as she won't last forever. She has lost every faculty and every sense; she neither sees, nor hears, nor speaks; but all customary pieties and kindly habits are respectable. Only you're strong if you *do* read 'em! I couldn't, my dear fellow. You *are* strong, I know; and that's just a part of what I wanted to say to you. You're very strong indeed. I've been going into your other things—they've interested me immensely. Someone ought to have told me about them before—someone I could believe. But whom can one believe? You're wonderfully on the right road—it's awfully decent work. Now do you mean to keep it up?—that's what I want to ask you."

"Do I mean to do others?" Paul asked, looking up from his sofa at his erect inquisitor and feeling partly like a happy little boy when the schoolmaster is gay, and partly like some pilgrim of old who might have consulted a world-famous oracle. St. George's own performance had been infirm, but as an adviser he would be infallible.

"Others—others? Ah, the number won't matter; one other would do, if it were really a further step—a throb of the same effort. What I mean is, have you it in your heart to go in for some sort of decent perfection?"

"Ah, decency, ah, perfection——!" the young man sincerely sighed. "I talked of them the other Sunday with Miss Fancourt."

It produced on the Master's part a laugh of odd acrimony. "Yes, they'll 'talk' of them as much as you like! But they'll do little to help one to them. There's no obligation of course; only you strike me as capable," he went on. "You must have thought it all over. I can't believe you're without a plan. That's the sensation you give me, and it's so *rare* that it really stirs one up—it makes you remarkable. If you *haven't* a plan, if you *don't* mean to keep it up, surely you're *within* your rights; it's nobody's business, no one can force you, and *not* more than two or three people will notice you don't go straight. The others—*all* the rest, every blest soul in England, will think you do—will think you *are* keeping it up: upon my honor they

will! I shall be one of the two or three who know better. Now the question is whether you can do it for two or three. Is that the stuff you're made of?"

It locked his guest a minute as in closed throbbing arms. "I could do it for one, if you were the one."

"Don't say that; I don't deserve it; it scorches me," he protested with eyes suddenly grave and glowing. "The 'one' is of course oneself, one's conscience, one's idea, the singleness of one's aim. I think of that pure spirit as a man thinks of a woman he has in some detested hour of his youth loved and forsaken. She haunts him with reproachful eyes, she lives forever before him. As an artist, you know, I've married for money." Paul stared and even blushed a little, confounded by this avowal; whereupon his host, observing the expression of his face, dropped a quick laugh and pursued: "You don't follow my figure. I'm not speaking of my dear wife, who had a small fortune—which, however, was not my bribe. I fell in love with her, as many other people have done. I refer to the mercenary muse whom I led to the altar of literature. Don't, my boy, put your nose into *that* yoke. The awful jade will lead you a life!"

Our hero watched him, wondering and deeply touched. "Haven't you been happy!"

"Happy? It's a kind of hell."

"There are things I should like to ask you," Paul said after a pause.

"Ask me anything in all the world. I'd turn myself inside out to save you."

"To 'save' me?" he quavered.

"To make you stick to it—to make you see it through. As I said to you the other night at Summersoft, let my example be vivid to you."

"Why, your books are not so bad as that," said Paul, fairly laughing and feeling that if ever a fellow had breathed the air of art——!

"So bad as what?"

"Your talent's so great that it's in everything you do, in

what's less good as well as in what's best. You've some forty volumes to show for it—forty volumes of wonderful life, of rare observation, of magnificent ability."

"I'm very clever, of course I know that"—but it was a thing, in fine, this author made nothing of. "Lord, what rot they'd all be if I hadn't been! I'm a successful charlatan," he went on—"I've been able to pass off my system. But do you know what it is? It's *carton-pierre*."

"*Carton-pierre*?" Paul was struck, and gaped.

"Lincrusta-Walton!"

"Ah, don't say such things—you make me bleed!" the younger man protested. "I see you in a beautiful, fortunate home, living in comfort and honor."

"Do you call it honor?"—his host took him up with an intonation that often comes back to him. "That's what I want *you* to go in for. I mean the real thing. This is brummagem."

"Brummagem?" Paul ejaculated while his eyes wandered, by a movement natural at the moment, over the luxurious room.

"Ah, they make it so well today—it's wonderfully deceptive!"

Our friend thrilled with the interest and perhaps even more with the pity of it. Yet he wasn't afraid to seem to patronize when he could still so far envy. "Is it deceptive that I find you living with every appearance of domestic felicity—blest with a devoted, accomplished wife, with children whose acquaintance I haven't yet had the pleasure of making, but who *must* be delightful young people, from what I know of their parents?"

St. George smiled as for the candor of his question. "It's all excellent, my dear fellow—heaven forbid I should deny it. I've made a great deal of money; my wife **has** known how to take care of it, to use it without wasting it, **to put** a good bit of it by, to make it fructify. I've got a **loaf on the shelf**; I've got everything in fact but the great thing."

"The great thing?" Paul kept echoing.

"The sense of having done the best—the sense which is the real life of the artist and the absence of which is his death, of having drawn from his intellectual instrument the finest music

that nature had hidden in it, of having played it as it should be played. He either does that or he doesn't—and if he doesn't he isn't worth speaking of. Therefore, precisely, those who really know *don't* speak of him. He may still hear a great chatter, but what he hears most is the incorruptible silence of Fame. I've squared her, you may say, for my little hour—but what's my little hour? Don't imagine for a moment," the Master pursued, "that I'm such a cad as to have brought you down here to abuse or to complain of my wife to you. She's a woman of distinguished qualities, to whom my obligations are immense; so that, if you please, we'll say nothing about her. My boys—my children are all boys—are straight and strong, thank God, and have no poverty of growth about them, no penury of needs. I receive periodically the most satisfactory attestation from Harrow, from Oxford, from Sandhurst—oh, we've done the best for them!—of their eminence as living, thriving, consuming organisms."

"It must be delightful to feel that the son of one's loins is at Sandhurst," Paul remarked enthusiastically.

"It is—it's charming. Oh, I'm a patriot!"

The young man then could but have the greater tribute of questions to pay. "Then what did you mean—the other night at Summersoft—by saying that children are a curse?"

"My dear youth, on what basis are we talking?" and St. George dropped upon the sofa at a short distance from him. Sitting a little sideways he leaned back against the opposite arm with his hands raised and interlocked behind his head. "On the supposition that a certain perfection's possible and even desirable—isn't it so? Well, all I say is that one's children interfere with perfection. One's wife interferes. Marriage interferes."

"You think, then, the artist shouldn't marry?"

"He does so at his peril—he does so at his cost."

"Not even when his wife's in sympathy with his work?"

"She never is—she can't be! Women haven't a conception of such things."

"Surely they on occasion work themselves," Paul objected.

"Yes, very badly indeed. Oh, of course, often, they think they understand, they think they sympathize. Then it is they're most dangerous. Their idea is that you shall do a great lot and get a great lot of money. Their great nobleness and virtue, their exemplary conscientiousness as British females, is in keeping you up to that. My wife makes all my bargains with my publishers for me, and has done so for twenty years. She does it consummately well—that's why I'm really pretty well off. Aren't you the father of their innocent babes, and will you withhold from them their natural sustenance? You asked me the other night if they're not an immense incentive. Of course they are—there's no doubt of that!"

Paul turned it over: it took, from eyes he had never felt open so wide, so much looking at. "For myself I've an idea I need incentives."

"Ah, well, then, *n'en parlons plus!*" his companion handsomely smiled.

"You are an incentive, I maintain," the young man went on. "You don't affect me in the way you'd apparently like to. Your great success is what I see—the pomp of Ennismore Gardens!"

"Success?"—St. George's eyes had a cold, fine light. "Do you call it success to be spoken of as you'd speak of me if you were sitting here with another artist—a young man intelligent and sincere like yourself? Do you call it success to make you blush—as you *would* blush!—if some foreign critic (some fellow, of course I mean, who should know what he was talking about and should have shown you he did, as foreign critics like to show it) were to say to you: 'He's the one, in this country, whom they consider the most perfect, isn't he?' Is it success to be the occasion of a young Englishman's **having** to stammer as you would have to stammer at such a **moment** for old England? No, no; success is to have made people **wriggle** to another tune. Do try it!"

Paul continued all gravely to glow. "Try what?"

"Try to do some really good work."

"Oh, I want to, heaven knows!"

"Well, you can't do it without sacrifices—don't believe that for a moment," the Master said. "I've made none. I've had everything. In other words, I've missed everything."

"You've had the full, rich, masculine, human, general life, with all the responsibilities and duties and burdens and sorrows and joys—all the domestic and social initiations and complications. They must be immensely suggestive, immensely amusing," Paul anxiously submitted.

"Amusing?"

"For a strong man—yes."

"They've given me subjects without number, if that's what you mean; but they've taken away at the same time the power to use them. I've touched a thousand things, but which one of them have I turned into gold? The artist has to do only with that—he knows nothing of any baser metal. I've led the life of the world, with my wife and my progeny; the clumsy, conventional, expensive, materialized, vulgarized, brutalized life of London. We've got everything handsome, even a carriage—we're perfect Philistines and prosperous, hospitable, eminent people. But, my dear fellow, don't try to stultify yourself and pretend you don't know what we *haven't* got. It's bigger than all the rest. Between artists—come!" the Master wound up. "You know as well as you sit there that you'd put a pistol ball into your brain if you had written my books!"

It struck his listener that the tremendous talk promised by him at Summersoft had indeed come off, and with a promptitude, a fullness, with which the latter's young imagination had scarcely reckoned. His impression fairly shook him and he throbbed with the excitement of such deep soundings and such strange confidences. He throbbed indeed with the conflict of his feelings—bewilderment and recognition and alarm, enjoyment and protest and assent, all commingled with tenderness (and a kind of shame in the participation) for the sores and bruises exhibited by so fine a creature, and with a sense of the tragic secret nursed under his trappings. The idea of *his*, Paul Overt's, becoming the occasion of such an act of humility made him flush and pant, at the same time that his consciousness was

in certain directions too much alive not to swallow—and not intensely to taste—every offered spoonful of the revelation. It had been his odd fortune to blow upon the deep waters, to make them surge and break in waves of strange eloquence. But how couldn't he give out a passionate contradiction of his host's last extravagance, how couldn't he enumerate to him the parts of his work he loved, the splendid things he had found in it, beyond the compass of any other writer of the day? St. George listened a while, courteously; then he said, laying his hand on his visitor's: "That's all very well; and if your idea's to do nothing better, there's no reason you shouldn't have as many good things as I—as many human and material appendages, as many sons or daughters, a wife with as many gowns, a house with as many servants, a stable with as many horses, a heart with as many aches." The Master got up when he had spoken thus—he stood a moment—near the sofa, looking down on his agitated pupil. "Are you possessed of any property?" it occurred to him to ask.

"None to speak of."

"Oh, well then there's no reason why you shouldn't make a goodish income—if you set about it the right way. Study *me* for that—study me well. You may really have horses."

Paul sat there some minutes without speaking. He looked straight before him—he turned over many things. His friend had wandered away, taking up a parcel of letters from the table where the roll of proofs had lain. "What was the book Mrs. St. George made you burn—the one she didn't like?" our young man brought out.

"The book she made me burn—how did you know that?" The Master looked up from his letters quite without the facial convulsion the pupil had feared.

"I heard her speak of it at Summersoft."

"Ah, yes—she's proud of it. I don't **know**—it was rather good."

"What was it about?"

"Let me see." And he seemed to make an effort to remember.

"Oh, yes—it was about myself." Paul gave an irrepressible

groan for the disappearance of such a production, and the elder man went on: "Oh, but *you* should write it—*you* should do me." And he pulled up—from the restless motion that had come upon him; his fine smile a generous glare. "There's a subject, my boy: no end of stuff in it!"

Again Paul was silent, but it was all tormenting. "Are there no women who really understand—who can take part in a sacrifice?"

"How can they take part? They themselves are the sacrifice. They're the idol and the altar and the flame."

"Isn't there even *one* who sees further?" Paul continued.

For a moment St. George made no answer; after which, having torn up his letters, he came back to the point all ironic. "Of course I know the one you mean. But not even Miss Fancourt."

"I thought you admired her so much."

"It's impossible to admire her more. Are you in love with her?" St. George asked.

"Yes," Paul Overt presently said.

"Well, then, give it up."

Paul stared. "Give up my 'love'?"

"Bless me, no. Your idea." And then as our hero but still gazed: "The one you talked with her about. The idea of a decent perfection."

"She'd help it—she'd help it!" the young man cried.

"For about a year—the first year, yes. After that she'd be as a millstone round its neck."

Paul frankly wondered. "Why, she has a passion for the real thing, for good work—for everything you and I care for most."

"'You and I' is charming, my dear fellow!" his friend laughed. "She has it indeed, but she'd have a still greater passion for her children—and very proper too. She'd insist on everything's being made comfortable, advantageous, propitious for them. That isn't the artist's business."

"The artist—the artist! Isn't he a man all the same?"

St. George had a grand grimace. "I mostly think not. You

know as well as I what he has to do: the concentration, the finish, the independence he must strive for from the moment he begins to wish his work really decent. Ah, my young friend, his relation to women, and especially to the one he's most intimately concerned with, is at the mercy of the damning fact that whereas he can in the nature of things have but one standard, they have about fifty. That's what makes them so superior," St. George amusingly added. "Fancy an artist with a change of standards as you'd have a change of shirts or of dinner plates. To *do* it—to do it and make it divine—is the only thing he has to think about. 'Is it done or not?' is his only question. Not 'Is it done as well as a proper solicitude for my dear little family will allow?' He has nothing to do with the relative—he has only to do with the absolute; and a dear little family may represent a dozen relatives."

"Then you don't allow him the common passions and affections of men?" Paul asked.

"Hasn't he a passion, an affection, which includes all the rest? Besides, let him have all the passions he likes—if he only keeps his independence. He must be able to be poor."

Paul slowly got up. "Why, then, did you advise me to make up to her?"

St. George laid a hand on his shoulder. "Because she'd make a splendid wife! And I hadn't read you then."

The young man had a strained smile. "I wish you had left me alone!"

"I didn't know that that wasn't good enough for you," his host returned.

"What a false position, what a condemnation of the artist, that he's a mere disfranchised monk and can produce his effect only by giving up personal happiness. What an arraignment of art!" Paul went on with a trembling voice.

"Ah, you don't imagine by chance that I'm defending art? 'Arraignment'—I should think so! Happy the societies in which it hasn't made its appearance, for from the moment it comes they have a consuming ache, they have an incurable corruption, in their breast. Most assuredly is the artist in a false position!

But I thought we were taking him for granted. Pardon me," St. George continued: "*Ginistrella* made me!"

Paul stood looking at the floor—one o'clock struck, in the stillness, from a neighboring church tower. "Do you think she'd ever look at me?" he put to his friend at last.

"Miss Fancourt—as a suitor? Why shouldn't I think it? That's why I've tried to favor you—I've had a little chance or two of bettering your opportunity."

"Forgive my asking you, but do you mean by keeping away yourself?" Paul said with a blush.

"I'm an old idiot—my place isn't there," St. George stated gravely.

"I'm nothing yet, I've no fortune; and there must be so many others," his companion pursued.

The Master took this considerably in, but made little of it. "You're a gentleman and a man of genius. I think you might do something."

"But if I must give that up—the genius?"

"Lots of people, you know, think I've kept mine," St. George wonderfully grinned.

"You've a genius for mystification!" Paul declared, but grasping his hand gratefully in attenuation of this judgment.

"Poor, dear boy, I do worry you! But try, try, all the same. I think your chances are good and you'll win a great prize."

Paul held fast the other's hand a minute; he looked into the strange deep face. "No, I *am* an artist—I can't help it!"

"Ah, show it then!" St. George pleadingly broke out. "Let me see before I die the thing I most want, the thing I yearn for: a life in which the passion—ours—is really intense. If you can be rare don't fail of it! Think what it is—how it counts—how it lives!"

They had moved to the door and he had closed both his hands over his companion's. Here they paused again and our hero breathed deep. "I want to live!"

"In what sense?"

"In the greatest."

"Well, then, stick to it—see it through."

"With your sympathy—your help?"

"Count on that—you'll be a great figure to me. Count on my highest appreciation, my devotion. You'll give me satisfaction—if that has any weight with you!" After which, as Paul appeared still to waver, his host added: "Do you remember what you said to me at Summersoft?"

"Something infatuated, no doubt!"

"I'll do anything in the world you tell me.' You said that."

"And you hold me to it?"

"Ah, what am I?" the Master expressively sighed.

"Lord, what things I shall have to do!" Paul almost moaned as he departed.

VI

"It goes on too much abroad—hang abroad!" These or something like them had been the Master's remarkable words in relation to the action of *Ginistrella*; and yet, though they had made a sharp impression on the author of that work, like almost all spoken words from the same source, he a week after the conversation I have noted left England for a long absence and full of brave intentions. It is not a perversion of the truth to pronounce that encounter the direct cause of his departure. If the oral utterance of the eminent writer had the privilege of moving him deeply, it was especially on his turning it over at leisure, hours and days later, that it appeared to yield him its full meaning and exhibit its extreme importance. He spent the summer in Switzerland and, having in September begun a new task, determined not to cross the Alps till he should have made a good start. To this end he returned to a quiet corner he knew well, on the edge of the Lake of Geneva and within sight of the towers of Chillon: a region and a view for which he had an affection that sprang from old associations and was capable of mysterious revivals and refreshments. Here he lingered late, till the snow was on the nearer hills, almost down to the limit to which he could climb when his stint, on the shortening afternoons, was performed. The autumn was fine, the lake was blue, and his book took form and direction. These felicities,

for the time, embroidered his life, which he suffered to cover him with its mantle. At the end of six weeks he felt he had learnt St. George's lesson by heart, had tested and proved its doctrine. Nevertheless he did a very inconsistent thing: before crossing the Alps he wrote to Marian Fancourt. He was aware of the perversity of this act, and it was only as a luxury, an amusement, the reward of a strenuous autumn, that he justified it. She had asked of him no such favor when, shortly before he left London, three days after their dinner in Ennismore Gardens, he went to take leave of her. It was true she had had no ground—he hadn't named his intention of absence. He had kept his counsel for want of due assurance: it was that particular visit that was, the next thing, to settle the matter. He had paid the visit to see how much he really cared for her, and quick departure, without so much as an explicit farewell, was the sequel to this inquiry, the answer to which had created within him a deep yearning. When he wrote her from Clarens he noted that he owed her an explanation (more than three months after!) for not having told her what he was doing.

She replied now briefly but promptly, and gave him a striking piece of news: that of the death, a week before, of Mrs. St. George. This exemplary woman had succumbed, in the country, to a violent attack of inflammation of the lungs—he would remember that for a long time she had been delicate. Miss Fancourt added that she believed her husband was overwhelmed by the blow; he would miss her too terribly—she had been everything in life to him. Paul Overt, on this, immediately wrote to St. George. He would from the day of their parting have been glad to remain in communication with him, but had hitherto lacked the right excuse for troubling so busy a man. Their long nocturnal talk came back to him in every detail, but this was no bar to an expression of proper sympathy with the head of the profession, for hadn't that very talk made it clear that the late accomplished lady was the influence that ruled his life? What catastrophe could be more cruel than the extinction of such an influence? This was to be exactly the tone taken by St. George in answering his young friend upwards

of a month later. He made no allusion of course to their important discussion. He spoke of his wife as frankly and generously as if he had quite forgotten that occasion, and the feeling of deep bereavement was visible in his words. "She took everything off my hands—off my mind. She carried on our life with the greatest art, the rarest devotion, and I was free, as few men can have been, to drive my pen, to shut myself up with my trade. This was a rare service—the highest she could have rendered me. Would I could have acknowledged it more fitly!"

A certain bewilderment, for our hero, disengaged itself from these remarks: they struck him as a contradiction, a retraction, strange on the part of a man who hadn't the excuse of witlessness. He had certainly not expected his correspondent to rejoice in the death of his wife, and it was perfectly in order that the rupture of a tie of more than twenty years should have left him sore. But if she had been so clear a blessing what in the name of consistency had the dear man meant by turning *him* upside down that night—by dosing him to that degree, at the most sensitive hour of his life, with the doctrine of renunciation? If Mrs. St. George was an irreparable loss, then her husband's inspired advice had been a bad joke and renunciation was a mistake. Overt was on the point of rushing back to London to show that, for his part, he was perfectly willing to consider it so, and he went so far as to take the manuscript of the first chapters of his new book out of his table drawer and insert it into a pocket of his portmanteau. This led to his catching a glimpse of certain pages he hadn't looked at for months, and that accident, in turn, to his being struck with the high promise they revealed—a rare result of such retrospections, which it was his habit to avoid as much as possible: they usually brought home to him that the glow of composition might be a purely subjective and misleading emotion. On this occasion a certain belief in himself disengaged itself whimsically from the serried erasures of his first draft, making him think it best after all to pursue his present trial to the end. If he could write so well under the rigor of privation it might be a mistake to change the

conditions before that spell had spent itself. He would go back to London of course, but he would go back only when he should have finished his book. This was the vow he privately made, restoring his manuscript to the table drawer. It may be added that it took him a long time to finish his book, for the subject was as difficult as it was fine, and he was literally embarrassed by the fullness of his notes. Something within him warned him he must make it supremely good—otherwise he should lack, as regards his private behavior, a handsome excuse. He had a horror of this deficiency and found himself as firm as need be on the question of the lamp and the file. He crossed the Alps at last and spent the winter, the spring, the ensuing summer, in Italy, where still, at the end of a twelvemonth, his task was unachieved. “Stick to it—see it through”: this general injunction of St. George’s was good also for the particular case. He applied it to the utmost, with the result that when in its slow order the summer had come round again he felt he had given all that was in him. This time he put his papers into his portmanteau, with the address of his publisher attached, and took his way northward.

He had been absent from London for two years; two years which, seeming to count as more, had made such a difference in his own life—through the production of a novel far stronger, he believed, than *Ginistrella*—that he turned out into Piccadilly, the morning after his arrival, with a vague expectation of changes, of finding great things had happened. But there were few transformations in Piccadilly—only three or four big red houses where there had been low black ones—and the brightness of the end of June peeped through the rusty railings of the Green Park and glittered in the varnish of the rolling carriages as he had seen it in other, more cursory Junes. It was a greeting he appreciated; it seemed friendly and pointed, added to the exhilaration of his finished book, of his having his own country and the huge oppressive amusing city that suggested everything, that contained everything, under his hand again. “Stay at home and do things here—do subjects we can measure,” St. George had said; and now it struck him he should ask nothing better

than to stay at home forever. Late in the afternoon he took his way to Manchester Square, looking out for a number he hadn't forgotten. Miss Fancourt, however, was not at home, so that he turned rather dejectedly from the door. His movement brought him face to face with a gentleman just approaching it and recognized on another glance as Miss Fancourt's father. Paul saluted this personage, and the General returned the greeting with his customary good manner—a manner so good, however, that you could never tell whether it meant he placed you. The disappointed caller felt the impulse to address him; then, hesitating, became both aware of having no particular remark to make, and convinced that though the old soldier remembered him he remembered him wrong. He therefore went his way without computing the irresistible effect his own evident recognition would have on the General, who never neglected a chance to gossip. Our young man's face was expressive, and observation seldom let it pass. He hadn't taken ten steps before he heard himself called after with a friendly semiarticulate "Er—I beg your pardon!" He turned round and the General, smiling at him from the porch, said: "Won't you come in? I won't leave you the advantage of me!" Paul declined to come in, and then felt regret, for Miss Fancourt, so late in the afternoon, might return at any moment. But her father gave him no second chance; he appeared mainly to wish not to have struck him as ungracious. A further look at the visitor had recalled something, enough at least to enable him to say: "You've come back, you've come back?" Paul was on the point of replying that he had come back the night before, but he suppressed, the next instant, this strong light on the immediacy of his visit and, giving merely a general assent, alluded to the young lady he deplored not having found. He had come late in the hope she would be in. "I'll tell her—I'll tell her," said the old man; and then he added quickly, gallantly: "You'll be giving us something new? It's a long time, isn't it?" Now he remembered him right.

"Rather long. I'm very slow," Paul explained. "I met you at Summersoft a long time ago."

"Oh, yes—with Henry St. George. I remember very well. Before his poor wife——" General Fancourt paused a moment, smiling a little less. "I daresay you know."

"About Mrs. St. George's death? Certainly—I heard at the time."

"Oh, no, I mean—I mean he's to be married."

"Ah, I've not heard that!" But just as Paul was about to add "To whom?" the General crossed his intention.

"When did you come back? I know you've been away—by my daughter. She was very sorry. You ought to give her something new."

"I came back last night," said our young man, to whom something had occurred which made his speech for the moment a little thick.

"Ah, most kind of you to come so soon. Couldn't you turn up at dinner?"

"At dinner?" Paul just mechanically repeated, not liking to ask whom St. George was going to marry, but thinking only of that.

"There are several people, I believe. Certainly St. George. Or afterwards if you like better. I believe my daughter expects——" He appeared to notice something in the visitor's raised face (on his steps he stood higher) which led him to interrupt himself, and the interruption gave him a momentary sense of awkwardness, from which he sought a quick issue. "Perhaps, then, you haven't heard she's to be married."

Paul gaped again. "To be married?"

"To Mr. St. George—it has just been settled. Odd marriage, isn't it?" Our listener uttered no opinion on this point: he only continued to stare. "But I daresay it will do—she's so awfully literary!" said the General.

Paul had turned very red. "Oh, it's a surprise—very interesting, very charming! I'm afraid I can't dine—so many thanks!"

"Well, you must come to the wedding!" cried the General. "Oh, I remember that day at Summersoft. He's a great man, you know."

"Charming—charming!" Paul stammered for retreat. He shook hands with the General and got off. His face was red and he had the sense of its growing more and more crimson. All the evening at home—he went straight to his rooms and remained there dinnerless—his cheek burned at intervals as if it had been smitten. He didn't understand what had happened to him, what trick had been played him, what treachery practiced. "None, none," he said to himself. "I've nothing to do with it. I'm out of it—it's none of my business." But that bewildered murmur was followed again and again by the incongruous ejaculation: "Was it a plan—was it a plan?" Sometimes he cried to himself, breathless, "Have I been duped, sold, swindled?" If at all, he was an absurd, an abject victim. It was as if he hadn't lost her till now. He had renounced her, yes; but that was another affair—that was a closed but not a locked door. Now he seemed to see the door quite slammed in his face. Did he expect her to wait—was she to give him his time like that: two years at a stretch? He didn't know what he had expected—he only knew what he hadn't. It wasn't this—it wasn't this. Mystification, bitterness, and wrath rose and boiled in him when he thought of the deference, the devotion, the credulity with which he had listened to St. George. The evening wore on and the light was long; but even when it had darkened he remained without a lamp. He had flung himself on the sofa, where he lay through the hours with his eyes either closed or gazing at the gloom, in the attitude of a man teaching himself to bear something, to bear having been made a fool of. He had made it too easy—that idea passed over him like a hot wave. Suddenly, as he heard eleven o'clock strike, he jumped up, remembering what General Fancourt had said about his coming after dinner. He'd go—he'd see her at least; perhaps he should see what it meant. He felt as if some of the elements of a hard sum had been given him and the others were wanting: he couldn't do his sum till he had got all his figures.

He dressed and drove quickly, so that by half-past eleven he was at Manchester Square. There were a good many carriages at the door—a party was going on; a circumstance which at the

last gave him a slight relief, for now he would rather see her in a crowd. People passed him on the staircase; they were going away, going "on" with the hunted herdlike movement of London society at night. But sundry groups remained in the drawing room, and it was some minutes, as she didn't hear him announced, before he discovered and spoke to her. In this short interval he had seen St. George talking to a lady before the fireplace; but he at once looked away, feeling unready for an encounter, and therefore couldn't be sure the author of *Shadowmere* noticed him. At all events he didn't come over; though Miss Fancourt did as soon as she saw him—she almost rushed at him, smiling, rustling, radiant, beautiful. He had forgotten what her head, what her face offered to the sight; she was in white, there were gold figures on her dress and her hair was a casque of gold. He saw in a single moment that she was happy, happy with an aggressive splendor. But she wouldn't speak to him of that, she would speak only of himself.

"I'm so delighted; my father told me. How kind of you to come!" She struck him as so fresh and brave, while his eyes moved over her, that he said to himself irresistibly: "Why to *him*, why not to youth, to strength, to ambition, to a future? Why, in her rich young force, to failure, to abdication, to superannuation?" In his thought at that sharp moment he blasphemed even against all that had been left of his faith in the peccable master. "I'm so sorry I missed you," she went on. "My father told me. How charming of you to have come so soon!"

"Does that surprise you?" Paul Overt asked.

"The first day? No, from you—nothing that's nice." She was interrupted by a lady who bade her good night, and he seemed to read that it cost her nothing to speak to him in that tone; it was her old liberal, lavish way, with a certain added amplitude that time had brought; and if this manner began to operate on the spot, at such a juncture in her history, perhaps in the other days too it had meant just as little or as much—a mere mechanical charity, with the difference now that she was satisfied, ready to give but in want of nothing. Oh, she was

satisfied—and why shouldn't she be? Why shouldn't she have been surprised at his coming the first day—for all the good she had ever got from him? As the lady continued to hold her attention Paul turned from her with a strange irritation in his complicated artistic soul and a sort of disinterested disappointment. She was so happy that it was almost stupid—a disproof of the extraordinary intelligence he had formerly found in her. Didn't she know how bad St. George could be, hadn't she recognized the awful thinness——? If she didn't she was nothing, and if she did why such an insolence of serenity? This question expired as our young man's eyes settled at last on the genius who had advised him in a great crisis. St. George was still before the chimney piece, but now he was alone—fixed, waiting, as if he meant to stop after everyone—and he met the clouded gaze of the young friend so troubled as to the degree of his right (the right his resentment would have enjoyed) to regard himself as a victim. Somehow the ravage of the question was checked by the Master's radiance. It was as fine in its way as Marian Fancourt's, it denoted the happy human being; but also it represented to Paul Overt that the author of *Shadowmere* had now definitely ceased to count—ceased to count as a writer. As he smiled a welcome across the place he was almost *banal*, was almost smug. Paul fancied that for a moment he hesitated to make a movement, as if, for all the world, he *had* his bad conscience; then they had already met in the middle of the room and had shaken hands—expressively, cordially on St. George's part. With which they had passed back together to where the elder man had been standing, while St. George said: "I hope you're never going away again. I've been dining here; the General told me." He was handsome, he was young, he looked as if he had still a great fund of life. He bent the friendliest, most unconfessing eyes on his disciple of a couple of years before; asked him about everything, his health, his plans, his late occupations, the new book. "When will it be out—soon, soon, I hope? Splendid, eh? That's right; you're a comfort, you're a luxury! I've read you all over again these last six months." Paul waited to see if he'd tell him what the

General had told him in the afternoon and what Miss Fancourt, verbally at least, of course hadn't. But as it didn't come out he at last put the question, "Is it true, the great news I hear—that you're to be married?"

"Ah, you *have* heard it, then?"

"Didn't the General tell you?" Paul asked.

The Master's face was wonderful. "Tell me what?"

"That he mentioned it to me this afternoon?"

"My dear fellow, I don't remember. We've been in the midst of people. I'm sorry, in the case, that I lose the pleasure, myself, of announcing to you a fact that touches me so nearly. It *is* a fact, strange as it may appear. It has only just become one. Isn't it ridiculous?" St. George made this speech without confusion, but on the other hand, so far as our friend could judge, without latent impudence. It struck his interlocutor that, to talk so comfortably and coolly, he must simply have forgotten what had passed between them. His next words, however, showed he hadn't, and they produced, as an appeal to Paul's own memory, an effect which would have been ludicrous if it hadn't been cruel. "Do you recall the talk we had at my house that night, into which Miss Fancourt's name entered? I've often thought of it since."

"Yes; no wonder you said what you did"—Paul was careful to meet his eyes.

"In the light of the present occasion? Ah, but there was no light then. How could I have foreseen this hour?"

"Didn't you think it probable?"

"Upon my honor, no," said Henry St. George. "Certainly I owe you that assurance. Think how my situation has changed."

"I see—I see," our young man murmured.

His companion went on as if, now that the subject had been broached, he was, as a person of imagination and tact, quite ready to give every satisfaction—being both by his genius and his method so able to enter into everything another might feel. "But it's not only that; for honestly, at my age, I never dreamed—a widower with big boys and with so little else! It has

turned out differently from anything one could have dreamed, and I'm fortunate beyond all measure. She has been so free, and yet she consents. Better than anyone else perhaps—for I remember how you liked her before you went away, and how she liked you—you can intelligently congratulate me."

"She has been so free!" Those words made a great impression on Paul Overt, and he almost writhed under that irony in them as to which it so little mattered whether it was designed or casual. Of course she had been free, and appreciably perhaps by his own act; for wasn't the Master's allusion to her having liked him a part of the irony too? "I thought that by your theory you disapproved of a writer's marrying."

"Surely—surely. But you don't call me a writer?"

"You ought to be ashamed," said Paul.

"Ashamed of marrying again?"

"I won't say that—but ashamed of your reasons."

The elder man beautifully smiled. "You must let me judge of them, my good friend."

"Yes; why not? For you judged wonderfully of mine."

The tone of these words appeared suddenly, for St. George, to suggest the unsuspected. He stared as if divining a bitterness. "Don't you think I've been straight?"

"You might have told me at the time perhaps."

"My dear fellow, when I say I couldn't pierce futurity——!"

"I mean afterwards."

The Master wondered. "After my wife's death?"

"When this idea came to you."

"Ah, never, never! I wanted to save you, rare and precious as you are."

Poor Overt looked hard at him. "Are you marrying Miss Fancourt to save me?"

"Not absolutely, but it adds to the pleasure. I shall be the making of you," St. George smiled. "I was greatly struck, after our talk, with the brave, devoted way you quitted the country, and still more perhaps with your force of character in remaining abroad. You're very strong—you're wonderfully strong."

Paul tried to sound his shining eyes; the strange thing was that he seemed sincere—not a mocking fiend. He turned away, and as he did so heard the Master say something about his giving them all the proof, being the joy of his old age. He faced him again, taking another look. “Do you mean to say you’ve stopped writing?”

“My dear fellow, of course I have. It’s too late. Didn’t I tell you?”

“I can’t believe it!”

“Of course you can’t—with your own talent! No, no; for the rest of my life I shall only read *you*.”

“Does she know that—Miss Fancourt?”

“She will—she will.” Did he mean this, our young man wondered, as a covert intimation that the assistance he should derive from that young lady’s fortune, moderate as it was, would make the difference of putting it in his power to cease to work ungratefully an exhausted vein? Somehow, standing there in the ripeness of his successful manhood, he didn’t suggest that any of his veins were exhausted. “Don’t you remember the moral I offered myself to you that night as pointing?” St. George continued. “Consider at any rate the warning I am at present.”

This was too much—he *was* the mocking fiend. Paul turned from him with a mere nod for good night and the sense in a sore heart that he might come back to him and his easy grace, his fine way of arranging things, sometime in the far future, but couldn’t fraternize with him now. It was necessary to his soreness to believe for the hour in the intensity of his grievance—all the more cruel for its not being a legal one. It was doubtless in the attitude of hugging this wrong that he descended the stairs without taking leave of Miss Fancourt, who hadn’t been in view at the moment he quitted the room. He was glad to get out into the honest, dusky, unsophisticating night, to move fast, to take his way home on foot. He walked a long time, going astray, paying no attention. He was thinking of too many other things. His steps recovered their direction, however, and at the end of an hour he found himself before his

door in the small, inexpensive, empty street. He lingered, questioning himself still before going in, with nothing around and above him but moonless blackness, a bad lamp or two, and a few faraway dim stars. To these last faint features he raised his eyes; he had been saying to himself that he should have been "sold" indeed, diabolically sold, if now, on his new foundation, at the end of a year, St. George were to put forth something of his prime quality—something of the type of *Shadowmere* and finer than his finest. Greatly as he admired his talent Paul literally hoped such an incident wouldn't occur; it seemed to him just then that he shouldn't be able to bear it. His late adviser's words were still in his ears—"You're very strong, wonderfully strong." Was he really? Certainly he would have to be, and it might a little serve for revenge. *Is* he? the reader may ask in turn, if his interest has followed the perplexed young man so far. The best answer to that perhaps is that he's doing his best, but that it's too soon to say. When the new book came out in the autumn Mr. and Mrs. St. George found it really magnificent. The former still has published nothing, but Paul doesn't even yet feel safe. I may say for him, however, that if this event were to occur he would really be the very first to appreciate it: which is perhaps a proof that the Master was essentially right and that nature had dedicated him to intellectual, not to personal passion.

THE MIDDLE YEARS*

The April day was soft and bright, and poor Dencombe, happy in the conceit of reasserted strength, stood in the garden of the hotel, comparing, with a deliberation in which, however, there was still something of languor, the attractions of easy strolls. He liked the feeling of the south, so far as you could have it in the north, he liked the sandy cliffs and the clustered pines, he liked even the colorless sea. "Bournemouth as a health resort" had sounded like a mere advertisement, but now he was reconciled to the prosaic. The sociable country postman, passing through the garden, had just given him a small parcel, which he took out with him, leaving the hotel to the right and creeping to a convenient bench that he knew of, a safe recess in the cliff. It looked to the south, to the tinted walls of the Island, and was protected behind by the sloping shoulder of the down. He was tired enough when he reached it, and for a moment he was disappointed; he was better, of course, but better, after all, than what? He should never again, as at one or two great moments of the past, be better than himself. The infinite of life had gone, and what was left of the dose was a small glass engraved like a thermometer by the apothecary. He sat and stared at the sea, which appeared all surface and twinkle, far shallower than the spirit of man. It was the abyss of human illusion that was the real, the tideless deep. He held his packet, which had come by book post, unopened on his knee, liking, in the lapse of so many joys (his illness had made him feel his age), to know that it was there, but taking for granted there could be no complete renewal of the pleasure, dear to young experience, of seeing oneself "just out." Dencombe, who had a reputation, had come out too often and knew too well in advance how he should look.

His postponement associated itself vaguely, after a little, with

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a group of three persons, two ladies and a young man, whom, beneath him, straggling and seemingly silent, he could see move slowly together along the sands. The gentleman had his head bent over a book, and was occasionally brought to a stop by the charm of this volume, which, as Dencombe could perceive even at a distance, had a cover alluringly red. Then his companions, going a little further, waited for him to come up, poking their parasols into the beach, looking around them at the sea and sky, and clearly sensible of the beauty of the day. To these things the young man with the book was still more clearly indifferent; lingering, credulous, absorbed, he was an object of envy to an observer from whose connection with literature all such artlessness had faded. One of the ladies was large and mature; the other had the spareness of comparative youth and of a social situation possibly inferior. The large lady carried back Dencombe's imagination to the age of crinoline; she wore a hat of the shape of a mushroom, decorated with a blue veil, and had the air, in her aggressive amplitude, of clinging to a vanished fashion or even a lost cause. Presently her companion produced from under the folds of a mantle a limp, portable chair which she stiffened out and of which the large lady took possession. This act, and something in the movement of either party, instantly characterized the performers—they performed for Dencombe's recreation—as opulent matron and humble dependent. What, moreover, was the use of being an approved novelist if one couldn't establish a relation between such figures; the clever theory, for instance, that the young man was the son of the opulent matron, and that the humble dependent, the daughter of a clergyman or an officer, nourished a secret passion for him? Was that not visible from the way she stole behind her protectress to look back at him? back to where he had let himself come to a full stop when his mother sat down to rest. His book was a novel; it had the catch-penny cover, and while the romance of life stood neglected at his side he lost himself in that of the circulating library. He moved mechanically to where the sand was softer, and ended by plumping down in it to finish his chapter at his ease. The humble dependent, discouraged by

his remoteness, wandered, with a martyred droop of the head, in another direction, and the exorbitant lady, watching the waves, offered a confused resemblance to a flying machine that had broken down.

When his drama began to fail Dencombe remembered that he had, after all, another pastime. Though such promptitude on the part of the publisher was rare, he was already able to draw from its wrapper his "latest," perhaps his last. The cover of *The Middle Years* was duly meretricious, the smell of the fresh pages the very odor of sanctity; but for the moment he went no further—he had become conscious of a strange alienation. He had forgotten what his book was about. Had the assault of his old ailment, which he had so fallaciously come to Bournemouth to ward off, interposed utter blankness as to what had preceded it? He had finished the revision of proof before quitting London, but his subsequent fortnight in bed had passed the sponge over color. He couldn't have chanted to himself a single sentence, couldn't have turned with curiosity or confidence to any particular page. His subject had already gone from him, leaving scarcely a superstition behind. He uttered a low moan as he breathed the chill of this dark void, so desperately it seemed to represent the completion of a sinister process. The tears filled his mild eyes; something precious had passed away. This was the pang that had been sharpest during the last few years—the sense of ebbing time, of shrinking opportunity; and now he felt not so much that his last chance was going as that it was gone indeed. He had done all that he should ever do, and yet he had not done what he wanted. This was the laceration—that practically his career was over; it was as violent as a rough hand at his throat. He rose from his seat nervously, like a creature hunted by a dread; then he fell back in his weakness and nervously opened his book. It was a single volume; he preferred single volumes and aimed at a rare compression. He began to read, and little by little, in this occupation, he was pacified and reassured. Everything came back to him, but came back with a wonder, came back, above all, with a high and magnificent beauty. He read his own prose, he turned

his own leaves, and had, as he sat there with the spring sunshine on the page, an emotion peculiar and intense. His career was over, no doubt, but it was over, after all, with *that*.

He had forgotten during his illness the work of the previous year; but what he had chiefly forgotten was that it was extraordinarily good. He lived once more into his story and was drawn down, as by a siren's hand, to where, in the dim underworld of fiction, the great glazed tank of art, strange, silent subjects float. He recognized his motive and surrendered to his talent. Never, probably, had that talent, such as it was, been so fine. His difficulties were still there, but what was also there, to his perception, though probably, alas! to nobody's else, was the art that in most cases had surmounted them. In his surprised enjoyment of this ability he had a glimpse of a possible reprieve. Surely its force was not spent—there were life and service in it yet. It had not come to him easily, it had been backward and roundabout. It was the child of time, the nursling of delay; he had struggled and suffered for it, making sacrifices not to be counted, and now that it was really mature was it to cease to yield, to confess itself brutally beaten? There was an infinite charm for Dencombe in feeling as he had never felt before that diligence *vincit omnia*. The result produced in his little book was somehow a result beyond his conscious intention: it was as if he had planted his genius, had trusted his method, and they had grown up and flowered with this sweetness. If the achievement had been real, however, the process had been manful enough. What he saw so intensely today, what he felt as a nail driven in, was that only now, at the very last, had he come into possession. His development had been abnormally slow, almost grotesquely gradual. He had been hindered and retarded by experience, and for long periods had only groped his way. It had taken too much of his life to produce too little of his art. The art had come, but it had come after everything else. At such a rate a first existence was too short—long enough only to collect material; so that to fructify, to use the material, one must have a second age, an extension. This extension was what poor Dencombe sighed for. As he turned the last leaves of his

volume he murmured: "Ah, for another go! ah, for a better chance!"

The three persons he had observed on the sands had vanished and then reappeared; they had now wandered up a path, an artificial and easy ascent, which led to the top of the cliff. Dencombe's bench was halfway down, on a sheltered ledge, and the large lady, a massive, heterogeneous person, with bold black eyes and kind red cheeks, now took a few moments to rest. She wore dirty gauntlets and immense diamond earrings; at first she looked vulgar, but she contradicted this announcement in an agreeable offhand tone. While her companions stood waiting for her she spread her skirts on the end of Dencombe's seat. The young man had gold spectacles, through which, with his finger still in his red-covered book, he glanced at the volume, bound in the same shade of the same color, lying on the lap of the original occupant of the bench. After an instant Dencombe understood that he was struck with a resemblance, had recognized the gilt stamp on the crimson cloth, was reading *The Middle Years*, and now perceived that somebody else had kept pace with him. The stranger was startled, possibly even a little ruffled, to find that he was not the only person who had been favored with an early copy. The eyes of the two proprietors met for a moment, and Dencombe borrowed amusement from the expression of those of his competitor, those, it might even be inferred, of his admirer. They confessed to some resentment—they seemed to say: "Hang it, has he got it *already*? Of course he's a brute of a reviewer!" Dencombe shuffled his copy out of sight while the opulent matron, rising from her repose, broke out: "I feel already the good of this air!"

"I can't say I do," said the angular lady. "I find myself quite let down."

"I find myself horribly hungry. At what time did you order lunch?" her protectress pursued.

The young person put the question by. "Dr. Hugh always orders it."

"I ordered nothing today—I'm going to make you diet," said their comrade.

"Then I shall go home and sleep. *Qui dort dine!*"

"Can I trust you to Miss Vernham?" asked Dr. Hugh of his elder companion.

"Don't I trust *you*?" she archly inquired.

"Not too much!" Miss Vernham, with her eyes on the ground, permitted herself to declare. "You must come with us at least to the house," she went on, while the personage on whom they appeared to be in attendance began to mount higher. She had got a little out of earshot; nevertheless Miss Vernham became, as far as Dencombe was concerned, less distinctly audible to murmur to the young man: "I don't think you realize all you owe the countess!"

Absently, a moment, Dr. Hugh caused his gold-rimmed spectacles to shine at her.

"Is that the way I strike you? I see—I see!"

"She's awfully good to us," continued Miss Vernham, compelled by her interlocutor's immovability to stand there in spite of his discussion of private matters. Of what use would it have been that Dencombe should be sensitive to shades had he not detected in that immovability a strange influence from the quiet old convalescent in the great tweed cape? Miss Vernham appeared suddenly to become aware of some such connection, for she added in a moment: "If you want to sun yourself here you can come back after you've seen us home."

Dr. Hugh, at this, hesitated, and Dencombe, in spite of a desire to pass for unconscious, risked a covert glance at him. What his eyes met this time, as it happened, was on the part of the young lady a queer stare, naturally vitreous, which made her aspect remind him of some figure (he couldn't name it) in a play or a novel, some sinister governess or tragic old maid. She seemed to scrutinize him, to challenge him, to say, from general spite: "What have you got to do with us?" At the same instant the rich humor of the countess reached them from above: "Come, come, my little lambs, you should follow your old *bergère*!" Miss Vernham turned away at this, pursuing the ascent, and Dr. Hugh, after another mute appeal to Dencombe and a moment's evident demur, deposited his book on the

bench, as if to keep his place or even as a sign that he would return, and bounded without difficulty up the rougher part of the cliff.

Equally innocent and infinite are the pleasures of observation and the resources engendered by the habit of analyzing life. It amused poor Dencombe, as he dawdled in his tepid air bath, to think that he was waiting for a revelation of something at the back of a fine young mind. He looked hard at the book on the end of the bench, but he wouldn't have touched it for the world. It served his purpose to have a theory which should not be exposed to refutation. He already felt better of his melancholy; he had, according to his old formula, put his head at the window. A passing countess could draw off the fancy when, like the elder of the ladies who had just retreated, she was as obvious as the giantess of a caravan. It was indeed general views that were terrible; short ones, contrary to an opinion sometimes expressed, were the refuge, were the remedy. Dr. Hugh couldn't possibly be anything but a reviewer who had understandings for early copies with publishers or with newspapers. He reappeared in a quarter of an hour, with visible relief at finding Dencombe on the spot, and the gleam of white teeth in an embarrassed but generous smile. He was perceptibly disappointed at the eclipse of the other copy of the book; it was a pretext the less for speaking to the stranger. But he spoke notwithstanding; he held up his own copy and broke out pleadingly:

"Do say, if you have occasion to speak of it, that it's the best thing he has done yet!"

Dencombe responded with a laugh: "Done yet" was so amusing to him, made such a grand avenue of the future. Better still, the young man took *him* for a reviewer. He pulled out *The Middle Years* from under his cape, but instinctively concealed any telltale look of fatherhood. This was partly because a person was always a fool for calling attention to his work. "Is that what you're going to say yourself?" he inquired of his visitor.

"I'm not quite sure I shall write anything. I don't as a regular thing—I enjoy in peace. But it's awfully fine."

Dencombe debated a moment. If his interlocutor had begun to abuse him he would have confessed on the spot to his identity, but there was no harm in drawing him on a little to praise. He drew him on with such success that in a few moments his new acquaintance, seated by his side, was confessing candidly that Dencombe's novels were the only ones he could read a second time. He had come the day before from London, where a friend of his, a journalist, had lent him his copy of the last—the copy sent to the office of the journal and already the subject of a "notice" which, as was pretended there (but one had to allow for "swagger"), it had taken a full quarter of an hour to prepare. He intimated that he was ashamed for his friend, and in the case of a work demanding and repaying study, of such inferior manners; and, with his fresh appreciation and inexplicable wish to express it, he speedily became for poor Dencombe a remarkable, a delightful apparition. Chance had brought the weary man of letters face to face with the greatest admirer in the new generation whom it was supposable he possessed. The admirer, in truth, was mystifying, so rare a case was it to find a bristling young doctor—he looked like a German physiologist—enamored of literary form. It was an accident, but happier than most accidents, so that Dencombe, exhilarated as well as confounded, spent half an hour in making his visitor talk while he kept himself quiet. He explained his premature possession of *The Middle Years* by an allusion to the friendship of the publisher, who, knowing he was at Bournemouth for his health, had paid him this graceful attention. He admitted that he had been ill, for Dr. Hugh would infallibly have guessed it; he even went so far as to wonder whether he mightn't look for some hygienic "tip" from a personage combining so bright an enthusiasm with a presumable knowledge of the remedies now in vogue. It would shake his faith a little perhaps to have to take a doctor seriously who could take *him* so seriously, but he enjoyed this gushing modern youth, and he felt with an acute pang that there would still be work to do in a world in which such odd combinations were presented. It was not true, what he had tried for renunciation's sake to believe, that all the combinations were

exhausted. They were not, they were not—they were infinite; the exhaustion was in the miserable artist.

Dr. Hugh was an ardent physiologist, saturated with the spirit of the age—in other words he had just taken his degree; but he was independent and various, he talked like a man who would have preferred to love literature best. He would fain have made fine phrases, but nature had denied him the trick. Some of the finest in *The Middle Years* had struck him inordinately, and he took the liberty of reading them to Dencombe in support of his plea. He grew vivid, in the balmy air, to his companion, for whose deep refreshment he seemed to have been sent; and was particularly ingenuous in describing how recently he had become acquainted, and how instantly infatuated, with the only man who had put flesh between the ribs of an art that was starving on superstitions. He had not yet written to him—he was deterred by a sentiment of respect. Dencombe at this moment felicitated himself more than ever on having never answered the photographers. His visitor's attitude promised him a luxury of intercourse, but he surmised that a certain security in it, for Dr. Hugh, would depend not a little on the countess. He learned without delay with what variety of countess they were concerned, as well as the nature of the tie that united the curious trio. The large lady, an Englishwoman by birth and the daughter of a celebrated baritone, whose taste, without his talent, she had inherited, was the widow of a French nobleman and mistress of all that remained of the handsome fortune, the fruit of her father's earnings, that had constituted her dower. Miss Vernham, an odd creature but an accomplished pianist, was attached to her person at a salary. The countess was generous, independent, eccentric; she traveled with her minstrel and her medical man. Ignorant and passionate, she had nevertheless moments in which she was almost irresistible. Dencombe saw her sit for her portrait in Dr. Hugh's free sketch, and felt the picture of his young friend's relation to her frame itself in his mind. This young friend, for a representative of the new psychology, was himself easily hypnotized, and if he became abnormally communicative it was only a sign of his real

subjection. Dencombe did accordingly what he wanted with him, even without being known as Dencombe.

Taken ill on a journey in Switzerland the countess had picked him up at an hotel, and the accident of his happening to please her had made her offer him, with her imperious liberality, terms that couldn't fail to dazzle a practitioner without patients and whose resources had been drained dry by his studies. It was not the way he would have elected to spend his time, but it was time that would pass quickly, and meanwhile she was wonderfully kind. She exacted perpetual attention, but it was impossible not to like her. He gave details about his queer patient, a "type" if there ever was one, who had in connection with her flushed obesity and in addition to the morbid strain of a violent and aimless will a grave organic disorder; but he came back to his loved novelist, whom he was so good as to pronounce more essentially a poet than many of those who went in for verse, with a zeal excited, as all his indiscretion had been excited, by the happy chance of Dencombe's sympathy and the coincidence of their occupation. Dencombe had confessed to a slight personal acquaintance with the author of *The Middle Years*, but had not felt himself as ready as he could have wished when his companion, who had never yet encountered a being so privileged, began to be eager for particulars. He even thought that Dr. Hugh's eye at that moment emitted a glimmer of suspicion. But the young man was too inflamed to be shrewd, and repeatedly caught up the book to exclaim: "Did you notice this?" or "Weren't you immensely struck with that?" "There's a beautiful passage toward the end," he broke out; and again he laid his hand upon the volume. As he turned the pages he came upon something else, while Dencombe saw him suddenly change color. He had taken up, as it lay on the bench, Dencombe's copy instead of his own, and his neighbor immediately guessed the reason of his start. Dr. Hugh looked grave an instant; then he said: "I see you've been altering the text!" Dencombe was a passionate corrector, a fingerer of style; the last thing he ever arrived at was a form final for himself. His ideal would have been to publish secretly, and then, on the pub-

lished text, treat himself to the terrified revise, sacrificing always a first edition and beginning for posterity and even for the collectors, poor dears, with a second. This morning, in *The Middle Years*, his pencil had pricked a dozen lights. He was amused at the effect of the young man's reproach; for an instant it made him change color. He stammered, at any rate, ambiguously; then, through a blur of ebbing consciousness, saw Dr. Hugh's mystified eyes. He only had time to feel he was about to be ill again—that emotion, excitement, fatigue, the heat of the sun, the solicitation of the air, had combined to play him a trick, before, stretching out a hand to his visitor with a plaintive cry, he lost his senses altogether.

Later he knew that he had fainted and that Dr. Hugh had got him home in a bath chair, the conductor of which, prowling within hail for custom, had happened to remember seeing him in the garden of the hotel. He had recovered his perception in the transit, and had, in bed, that afternoon, a vague recollection of Dr. Hugh's young face, as they went together, bent over him in a comforting laugh and expressive of something more than a suspicion of his identity. That identity was ineffaceable now, and all the more that he was disappointed, disgusted. He had been rash, been stupid, had gone out too soon, stayed out too long. He oughtn't to have exposed himself to strangers, he ought to have taken his servant. He felt as if he had fallen into a hole too deep to descry any little patch of heaven. He was confused about the time that had elapsed—he pieced the fragments together. He had seen his doctor, the real one, the one who had treated him from the first and who had again been very kind. His servant was in and out on tiptoe, looking very wise after the fact. He said more than once something about the sharp young gentleman. The rest was vagueness, in so far as it wasn't despair. The vagueness, however, justified itself by dreams, dozing anxieties from which he finally emerged to the consciousness of a dark room and a shaded candle.

"You'll be all right again—I know all about you now," said a voice near him that he knew to be young. Then his meeting with Dr. Hugh came back. He was too discouraged to joke

about it yet, but he was able to perceive, after a little, that the interest of it was intense for his visitor. "Of course I can't attend you professionally—you've got your own man, with whom I've talked and who's excellent," Dr. Hugh went on. "But you must let me come to see you as a good friend. I've just looked in before going to bed. You're doing beautifully, but it's a good job I was with you on the cliff. I shall come in early tomorrow. I want to do something for you. I want to do everything. You've done a tremendous lot for me." The young man held his hand, hanging over him, and poor Dencombe, weakly aware of this living pressure, simply lay there and accepted his devotion. He couldn't do anything less—he needed help too much.

The idea of the help he needed was very present to him that night, which he spent in a lucid stillness, an intensity of thought that constituted a reaction from his hours of stupor. He was lost, he was lost—he was lost if he couldn't be saved. He was not afraid of suffering, of death; he was not even in love with life; but he had had a deep demonstration of desire. It came over him in the long, quiet hours that only with *The Middle Years* had he taken his flight; only on that day, visited by soundless processions, had he recognized his kingdom. He had had a revelation of his range. What he dreaded was the idea that his reputation should stand on the unfinished. It was not with his past but with his future that it should properly be concerned. Illness and age rose before him like specters with pitiless eyes: how was he to bribe such fates to give him the second chance? He had had the one chance that all men have—he had had the chance of life. He went to sleep again very late, and when he awoke Dr. Hugh was sitting by his head. There was already, by this time, something beautifully familiar in him.

"Don't think I've turned out your physician," he said; "I'm acting with his consent. He has been here and seen you. Somehow he seems to trust me. I told him how we happened to come together yesterday, and he recognizes that I've a peculiar right."

Dencombe looked at him with a calculating earnestness. "How have you squared the countess?"

The young man blushed a little, but he laughed. "Oh, never mind the countess!"

"You told me she was very exacting."

Dr. Hugh was silent a moment. "So she is."

"And Miss Vernham's an *intrigante*."

"How do you know that?"

"I know everything. One *has* to, to write decently!"

"I think she's mad," said limpid Dr. Hugh.

"Well, don't quarrel with the countess—she's a present help to you."

"I don't quarrel," Dr. Hugh replied. "But I don't get on with silly women." Presently he added: "You seem very much alone."

"That often happens at my age. I've outlived, I've lost by the way."

Dr. Hugh hesitated; then surmounting a soft scruple: "Whom have you lost?"

"Everyone."

"Ah, no!" the young man murmured, laying a hand on his arm.

"I once had a wife—I once had a son. My wife died when my child was born, and my boy, at school, was carried off by typhoid."

"I wish I'd been there!" said Dr. Hugh simply.

"Well—if you're here!" Dencombe answered, with a smile that, in spite of dimness, showed how much he liked to be sure of his companion's whereabouts.

"You talk strangely of your age. You're not old."

"Hypocrite—so early!"

"I speak physiologically."

"That's the way I've been speaking for the last five years, and it's exactly what I've been saying to myself. It isn't till we *are* old that we begin to tell ourselves we're not!"

"Yet I know I myself am young," Dr. Hugh declared.

"Not so well as I!" laughed his patient, whose visitor indeed would have established the truth in question by the honesty with which he changed the point of view, remarking that it must be one of the charms of age—at any rate in the case of high dis-

tion—to feel that one has labored and achieved. Dr. Hugh employed the common phrase about earning one's rest, and it made poor Dencombe, for an instant, almost angry. He recovered himself, however, to explain, lucidly enough, that if he, ungraciously, knew nothing of such a balm, it was doubtless because he had wasted inestimable years. He had followed Literature from the first, but he had taken a lifetime to get alongside of her. Only today, at last, had he begun to *see*, so that what he had hitherto done was a movement without a direction. He had ripened too late, and was so clumsily constituted that he had had to teach himself by mistakes.

"I prefer your flowers, then, to other people's fruit, and your mistakes to other people's successes," said gallant Dr. Hugh. "It's for your mistakes I admire you."

"You're happy—you don't know," Dencombe answered.

Looking at his watch the young man had got up; he named the hour of the afternoon at which he would return. Dencombe warned him against committing himself too deeply, and expressed again all his dread of making him neglect the countess—perhaps incur her displeasure.

"I want to be like you—I want to learn by mistakes!" Dr. Hugh laughed.

"Take care you don't make too grave a one! But do come back," Dencombe added, with the glimmer of a new idea.

"You should have had more vanity!" Dr. Hugh spoke as if he knew the exact amount required to make a man of letters normal.

"No, no—I only should have had more time. I want another go."

"Another go?"

"I want an extension."

"An extension?" Again Dr. Hugh repeated Dencombe's words, with which he seemed to have been struck.

"Don't you know?—I want to what they call 'live.' "

The young man, for good-by, had taken his hand, which closed with a certain force. They looked at each other hard a moment. "You *will* live," said Dr. Hugh.

"Don't be superficial. It's too serious!"

"You *shall* live!" Dencombe's visitor declared, turning pale.

"Ah, that's better!" And as he retired the invalid, with a troubled laugh, sank gratefully back.

All that day and all the following night he wondered if it mightn't be arranged. His doctor came again, his servant was attentive, but it was to his confident young friend that he found himself mentally appealing. His collapse on the cliff was plausibly explained, and his liberation, on a better basis, promised for the morrow; meanwhile, however, the intensity of his meditations kept him tranquil and made him indifferent. The idea that occupied him was none the less absorbing because it was a morbid fancy. Here was a clever son of the age, ingenious and ardent, who happened to have set him up for connoisseurs to worship. This servant of his altar had all the new learning in science and all the old reverence in faith; wouldn't he therefore put his knowledge at the disposal of his sympathy, his craft at the disposal of his love? Couldn't he be trusted to invent a remedy for a poor artist to whose art he had paid a tribute? If he couldn't, the alternative was hard: Dencombe would have to surrender to silence, unvindicated and undivined. The rest of the day and all the next he toyed in secret with this sweet futility. Who would work the miracle for him but the young man who could combine such lucidity with such passion? He thought of the fairy tales of science, and charmed himself into forgetting that he looked for a magic that was not of this world. Dr. Hugh was an apparition, and that placed him above the law. He came and went while his patient, who sat up, followed him with supplicating eyes. The interest of knowing the great author had made the young man begin *The Middle Years* afresh, and would help him to find a deeper meaning in its pages. Dencombe had told him what he "tried for"; with all his intelligence, on a first perusal, Dr. Hugh had failed to guess it. The baffled celebrity wondered then who in the world *would* guess it; he was amused once more at the fine, full way with which an intention could be missed. Yet he wouldn't rail at the general mind today—consoling as that ever had been:

the revelation of his own slowness had seemed to make all stupidity sacred.

Dr. Hugh, after a little, was visibly worried, confessing, on inquiry, to a source of embarrassment at home. "Stick to the countess—don't mind me," Dencombe said repeatedly; for his companion was frank enough about the large lady's attitude. She was so jealous that she had fallen ill—she resented such a breach of allegiance. She paid so much for his fidelity that she must have it all; she refused him the right to other sympathies, charged him with scheming to make her die alone, for it was needless to point out how little Miss Vernham was a resource in trouble. When Dr. Hugh mentioned that the countess would already have left Bournemouth if he hadn't kept her in bed, poor Dencombe held his arm tighter and said with decision: "Take her straight away." They had gone out together, walking back to the sheltered nook in which, the other day, they had met. The young man, who had given his companion a personal support, declared with emphasis that his conscience was clear—he could ride two horses at once. Didn't he dream, for his future, of a time when he should have to ride five hundred? Longing equally for virtue, Dencombe replied that in that golden age no patient would pretend to have contracted with him for his whole attention. On the part of the countess was not such an avidity lawful? Dr. Hugh denied it, said there was no contract, but only a free understanding, and that a sordid servitude was impossible to a generous spirit; he liked moreover to talk about art, and that was the subject on which, this time, as they sat together on the sunny bench, he tried most to engage the author of *The Middle Years*. Dencombe, soaring again a little on the weak wings of convalescence and still haunted by that happy notion of an organized rescue, found another strain of eloquence to plead the cause of a certain splendour "last manner," the very citadel, as it would prove, of his reputation, the stronghold into which his real treasure would be gathered. While his listener gave up the morning and the great, still sea appeared to wait, he had a wonderful explanatory hour. Even for himself he was inspired as he told of what his

treasure would consist—the precious metals he would dig from the mine, the jewels rare, strings of pearls, he would hang between the columns of his temple. He was wonderful for himself, so thick his convictions crowded; but he was still more wonderful for Dr. Hugh, who assured him, none the less, that the very pages he had just published were already encrusted with gems. The young man, however, panted for the combinations to come, and, before the face of the beautiful day, renewed to Dencombe his guarantee that his profession would hold itself responsible for such a life. Then he suddenly clapped his hand upon his watch pocket and asked leave to absent himself for half an hour. Dencombe waited there for his return, but was at last recalled to the actual by the fall of a shadow across the ground. The shadow darkened into that of Miss Vernham, the young lady in attendance on the countess; whom Dencombe, recognizing her, perceived so clearly to have come to speak to him that he rose from his bench to acknowledge the civility. Miss Vernham indeed proved not particularly civil; she looked strangely agitated, and her type was now unmistakable.

"Excuse me if I inquire," she said, "whether it's too much to hope that you may be induced to leave Dr. Hugh alone." Then, before Dencombe, greatly disconcerted, could protest: "You ought to be informed that you stand in his light; that you may do him a terrible injury."

"Do you mean by causing the countess to dispense with his services?"

"By causing her to disinherit him." Dencombe stared at this, and Miss Vernham pursued, in the gratification of seeing she could produce an impression: "It has depended on himself to come into something very handsome. He has had a magnificent prospect, but I think you've succeeded in spoiling it."

"Not intentionally, I assure you. Is there no hope that the accident may be repaired?" Dencombe asked.

"She was ready to do anything for him. She takes great fancies, she lets herself go—it's her way. She has no relations, she's free to dispose of her money, and she's very ill."

"I'm very sorry to hear it," Dencombe stammered.

"Wouldn't it be possible for you to leave Bournemouth? That's what I've come to ask of you."

Poor Dencombe sank down on his bench. "I'm very ill myself, but I'll try!"

Miss Vernham still stood there with her colorless eyes and the brutality of her good conscience. "Before it's too late, please!" she said; and with this she turned her back, in order, quickly, as if it had been a business to which she could spare but a precious moment, to pass out of his sight.

Oh, yes! after this Dencombe was certainly very ill. Miss Vernham had upset him with her rough, fierce news; it was the sharpest shock to him to discover what was at stake for a penniless young man of fine parts. He sat trembling on his bench, staring at the waste of waters, feeling sick with the directness of the blow. He was indeed too weak, too unsteady, too alarmed; but he would make the effort to get away, for he couldn't accept the guilt of interference, and his honor was really involved. He would hobble home, at any rate, and then he would think what was to be done. He made his way back to the hotel and, as he went, had a characteristic vision of Miss Vernham's great motive. The countess hated women, of course; Dencombe was lucid about that; so the hungry pianist had no personal hopes and could only console herself with the bold conception of helping Dr. Hugh in order either to marry him after he should get his money or to induce him to recognize her title to compensation and buy her off. If she had befriended him at a fruitful crisis he would really, as a man of delicacy, and she knew what to think of that point, have to reckon with her.

At the hotel Dencombe's servant insisted on his going back to bed. The invalid had talked about catching a train and had begun with orders to pack; after which his humming nerves had yielded to a sense of sickness. He consented to see his physician, who immediately was sent for, but he wished it to be understood that his door was irrevocably closed to Dr. Hugh. He had his plan, which was so fine that he rejoiced in it after getting back to bed. Dr. Hugh, suddenly finding himself snubbed without mercy, would, in natural disgust and to the joy of Miss

Vernham, renew his allegiance to the countess. When his physician arrived Dencombe learned that he was feverish and that this was very wrong; he was to cultivate calmness and try, if possible, not to think. For the rest of the day he wooed stupidity; but there was an ache that kept him sentient, the probable sacrifice of his "extension," the limit of his course. His medical adviser was anything but pleased; his successive relapses were ominous. He charged this personage to put out a strong hand and take Dr. Hugh off his mind—it would contribute so much to his being quiet. The agitating name, in his room, was not mentioned again, but his security was a smothered fear, and it was not confirmed by the receipt, at ten o'clock that evening, of a telegram which his servant opened and read for him and to which, with an address in London, the signature of Miss Vernham was attached. "Beseech you to use all influence to make our friend join us here in the morning. Countess much the worse for dreadful journey, but everything may still be saved." The two ladies had gathered themselves up and had been capable in the afternoon of a spiteful revolution. They had started for the capital, and if the elder one, as Miss Vernham had announced, was very ill, she had wished to make it clear that she was proportionately reckless. Poor Dencombe, who was not reckless, and who only desired that everything should indeed be "saved," sent this missive straight off to the young man's lodging and had on the morrow the pleasure of knowing that he had quitted Bournemouth by an early train.

Two days later he pressed in with a copy of a literary journal in his hand. He had returned because he was anxious and for the pleasure of flourishing the great review of *The Middle Years*. Here at least was something adequate—it rose to the occasion; it was an acclamation, a reparation, a critical attempt to place the author in the niche he had fairly won. Dencombe accepted and submitted; he made neither objection nor inquiry, for old complications had returned and he had had two atrocious days. He was convinced not only that he should never again leave his bed, so that his young friend might pardonably remain, but that the demand he should make on the patience of beholders

would be very moderate indeed. Dr. Hugh had been to town, and he tried to find in his eyes some confession that the countess was pacified and his legacy clinched; but all he could see there was the light of his juvenile joy in two or three of the phrases of the newspaper. Dencombe couldn't read them, but when his visitor had insisted on repeating them more than once he was able to shake an unintoxicated head. "Ah, no! but they would have been true of what I *could* have done!"

"What people 'could have done' is mainly what they've in fact done," Dr. Hugh contended.

"Mainly, yes; but I've been an idiot!" said Dencombe.

Dr. Hugh did remain; the end was coming fast. Two days later Dencombe observed to him, by way of the feeblest of jokes, that there would now be no question whatever of a second chance. At this the young man stared; then he exclaimed: "Why, it has come to pass—it has come to pass! The second chance has been the public's—the chance to find the point of view, to pick up the pearl!"

"Oh, the pearl!" poor Dencombe uneasily sighed. A smile as cold as a winter sunset flickered on his drawn lips as he added: "The pearl is the unwritten—the pearl is the unalloyed, the *rest*, the lost!"

From that moment he was less and less present, heedless to all appearance of what went on around him. His disease was definitely mortal, of an action as relentless, after the short arrest that had enabled him to fall in with Dr. Hugh, as a leak in a great ship. Sinking steadily, though this visitor, a man of rare resources, now cordially approved by his physician, showed endless art in guarding him from pain, poor Dencombe kept no reckoning of favor or neglect, betrayed no symptom of regret or speculation. Yet toward the last he gave a sign of having noticed that for two days Dr. Hugh had not been in his room, a sign that consisted of his suddenly opening his eyes to ask of him if he had spent the interval with the countess.

"The countess is dead," said Dr. Hugh. "I knew that in a particular contingency she wouldn't resist. I went to her grave."

Dencombe's eyes opened wider. "She left you 'something handsome'?"

The young man gave a laugh almost too light for a chamber of woe. "Never a penny! She roundly cursed me."

"Cursed you?" Dencombe murmured.

"For giving her up. I gave her up for *you*. I had to choose," his companion explained.

"You chose to let a fortune go?"

"I chose to accept, whatever they might be, the consequences of my infatuation," smiled Dr. Hugh. Then, as a larger pleasantry: "A fortune be hanged! It's your own fault if I can't get your things out of my head."

The immediate tribute to his humor was a long, bewildered moan; after which, for many hours, many days, Dencombe lay motionless and absent. A response so absolute, such a glimpse of a definite result, and such a sense of credit worked together in his mind and producing a strange commotion, slowly altered and transfigured his despair. The sense of cold submersion left him—he seemed to float without an effort. The incident was extraordinary as evidence, and it shed an intenser light. At the last he signed to Dr. Hugh to listen, and, when he was down on his knees by the pillow, brought him very near.

"You've made me think it all a delusion."

"Not your glory, my dear friend," stammered the young man.

"Not my glory—what there is of it! It *is* glory—to have been tested, to have had our little quality, and cast our little spell. The thing is to have made somebody care. You happen to be crazy, of course, but that doesn't affect the law."

"You're a great success!" said Dr. Hugh, putting into his young voice the ring of a marriage bell.

Dencombe lay taking this in; then he gathered strength to speak once more. "A second chance—*that's* the delusion. There never was to be but one. We work in the dark—we do what we can—we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion, and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art."

"If you've doubted, if you've despaired, you've always 'done' it," his visitor subtly argued.

"We've done something or other," Dencombe conceded.

"Something or other is everything. It's the feasible. It's *you!*"

"Comforter!" poor Dencombe ironically sighed.

"But it's true," insisted his friend.

"It's true. It's frustration that doesn't count."

"Frustration's only life," said Dr. Hugh.

"Yes, it's what passes." Poor Dencombe was barely audible, but he had marked with the words the virtual end of his first and only chance.

THE REAL THING *

I

When the porter's wife, who used to answer the house bell, announced "A gentleman and a lady, sir," I had, as I often had in those days—the wish being father to the thought—an immediate vision of sitters. Sitters my visitors in this case proved to be; but not in the sense I should have preferred. There was nothing at first, however, to indicate that they mightn't have come for a portrait. The gentleman, a man of fifty, very high and very straight, with a mustache slightly grizzled and a dark gray walking coat admirably fitted, both of which I noted professionally—I don't mean as a barber or yet as a tailor—would have struck me as a celebrity if celebrities often were striking. It was a truth of which I had for some time been conscious that a figure with a good deal of frontage was, as one might say, almost never a public institution. A glance at the lady helped to remind me of this paradoxical law: she also looked too distinguished to be a "personality." Moreover one would scarcely come across two variations together.

Neither of the pair immediately spoke—they only prolonged the preliminary gaze suggesting that each wished to give the other a chance. They were visibly shy; they stood there letting me take them in—which, as I afterwards perceived, was the most practical thing they could have done. In this way their embarrassment served their cause. I had seen people painfully reluctant to mention that they desired anything so gross as to be represented on canvas; but the scruples of my new friends appeared almost insurmountable. Yet the gentleman might have said "I should like a portrait of my wife," and the lady might have said "I should like a portrait of my husband." Perhaps they weren't husband and wife—this naturally would make the

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matter more delicate. Perhaps they wished to be done together—in which case they ought to have brought a third person to break the news.

"We come from Mr. Rivet," the lady finally said with a dim smile that had the effect of a moist sponge passed over a "sunk" piece of painting, as well as of a vague allusion to vanished beauty. She was as tall and straight, in her degree, as her companion, and with ten years less to carry. She looked as sad as a woman could look whose face was not charged with expression; that is her tinted oval mask showed waste as an exposed surface shows friction. The hand of time had played over her freely, but to an effect of elimination. She was slim and stiff, and so well-dressed, in dark-blue cloth, with lappets and pockets and buttons, that it was clear she employed the same tailor as her husband. The couple had an indefinable air of prosperous thrift—they evidently got a good deal of luxury for their money. If I was to be one of their luxuries, it would behoove me to consider my terms.

"Ah, Claude Rivet recommended me?" I echoed; and I added that it was very kind of him, though I could reflect that, as he only painted landscape, this wasn't a sacrifice.

The lady looked very hard at the gentleman, and the gentleman looked round the room. Then, staring at the door a moment and stroking his mustache, he rested his pleasant eyes on me with the remark: "He said you were the right one."

"I try to be, when people want to sit."

"Yes, we should like to," said the lady anxiously.

"Do you mean together?"

My visitors exchanged a glance. "If you could do anything with *me* I suppose it would be double," the gentleman stammered.

"Oh, yes, there's naturally a higher **charge** for two figures than for one."

"We should like to make it pay," the husband confessed.

"That's very good of you," I returned, appreciating so unwonted a sympathy—for I supposed he meant pay the artist.

A sense of strangeness seemed to dawn on the lady. "We

mean for the illustrations—Mr. Rivet said you might put one in.”

“Put in—an illustration?” I was equally confused.

“Sketch her off, you know,” said the gentleman, coloring.

It was only then that I understood the service Claude Rivet had rendered me; he had told them how I worked in black and white, for magazines, for storybooks, for sketches of contemporary life, and consequently had copious employment for models. These things were true, but it was not less true—I may confess it now; whether because the aspiration was to lead to everything or to nothing I leave the reader to guess—that I couldn’t get the honors, to say nothing of the emoluments, of a great painter of portraits out of my head. My “illustrations” were my potboilers; I looked to a different branch of art—far and away the most interesting it had always seemed to me—to perpetuate my fame. There was no shame in looking to it also to make my fortune; but that fortune was by so much further from being made from the moment my visitors wished to be “done” for nothing. I was disappointed; for in the pictorial sense I had immediately *seen* them. I had seized their type—I had already settled what I would do with it. Something that wouldn’t absolutely have pleased them, I afterwards reflected.

“Ah, you’re—you’re—a——?” I began as soon as I had mastered my surprise. I couldn’t bring out the dingy word “models”: it seemed so little to fit the case.

“We haven’t had much practice,” said the lady.

“We’ve got to *do* something, and we’ve thought that an artist in your line might perhaps make something of us,” her husband threw off. He further mentioned that they didn’t know many artists and that they had gone first, on the off chance—he painted views of course, but sometimes put in figures; perhaps I remembered—to Mr. Rivet, whom they had met a few years before at a place in Norfolk where he was sketching.

“We used to sketch a little ourselves,” the lady hinted.

“It’s very awkward, but we absolutely *must* do something,” her husband went on.

"Of course we're not so *very* young," she admitted with a wan smile.

With the remark that I might as well know something more about them the husband had handed me a card extracted from a neat new pocketbook—their appurtenances were all of the freshest—and inscribed with the words "Major Monarch." Impressive as these words were they didn't carry my knowledge much further; but my visitor presently added: "I've left the army and we've had the misfortune to lose our money. In fact our means are dreadfully small."

"It's awfully trying—a regular strain," said Mrs. Monarch.

They evidently wished to be discreet—to take care not to swagger because they were gentlefolk. I felt them willing to recognize this as something of a drawback, at the same time that I guessed at an underlying sense—their consolation in adversity—that they *had* their points. They certainly had; but these advantages struck me as preponderantly social; such, for instance, as would help to make a drawing room look well. However, a drawing room was always, or ought to be, a picture.

In consequence of his wife's allusion to their age Major Monarch observed: "Naturally it's more for the figure that we thought of going in. We can still hold ourselves up." On the instant I saw that the figure was indeed their strong point. His "naturally" didn't sound vain, but it lighted up the question. "*She* has the best one," he continued, nodding at his wife with a pleasant after-dinner absence of circumlocution. I could only reply, as if we were in fact sitting over our wine, that this didn't prevent his own from being very good; which led him in turn to make answer: "We thought that if you ever have to do people like us we might be something like it. *She* particularly—for a lady in a book, you know."

I was so amused by them that, to get more of it, I did my best to take their point of view; and though it ~~was~~ an embarrassment to find myself appraising physically, as if ~~they~~ were animals on hire or useful blacks, a pair whom I should have expected to meet only in one of the relations in which criticism is tacit, I looked at Mrs. Monarch judicially enough to be able to exclaim

after a moment with conviction: "Oh, yes, a lady in a book!" She was singularly like a bad illustration.

"We'll stand up, if you like," said the Major; and he raised himself before me with a really grand air.

I could take his measure at a glance—he was six feet two and a perfect gentleman. It would have paid any club in process of formation and in want of a stamp to engage him at a salary to stand in the principal window. What struck me at once was that in coming to me they had rather missed their vocation; they could surely have been turned to better account for advertising purposes. I couldn't, of course, see the thing in detail, but I could see them make somebody's fortune—I don't mean their own. There was something in them for a waistcoat maker, an hotelkeeper or a soap vendor. I could imagine "We always use it" pinned on their bosoms with the greatest effect; I had a vision of the brilliancy with which they would launch a table d'hôte.

Mrs. Monarch sat still, not from pride but from shyness, and presently her husband said to her: "Get up, my dear, and show how smart you are." She obeyed, but she had no need to get up to show it. She walked to the end of the studio and then came back blushing, her fluttered eyes on the partner of her appeal. I was reminded of an incident I had accidentally had a glimpse of in Paris—being with a friend there, a dramatist about to produce a play, when an actress came to him to ask to be entrusted with a part. She went through her paces before him, walked up and down as Mrs. Monarch was doing. Mrs. Monarch did it quite as well, but I abstained from applauding. It was very odd to see such people apply for such poor pay. She looked as if she had ten thousand a year. Her husband had used the word that described her: she was in the London current jargon essentially and typically "smart." Her figure was, in the same order of ideas, conspicuously and irreproachably "good." For a woman of her age her waist was surprisingly small; her elbow moreover had the orthodox crook. She held her head at the conventional angle, but why did she come to *me*? She ought to have tried on jackets at a big shop.

I feared my visitors were not only destitute but "artistic"—which would be a great complication. When she sat down again I thanked her, observing that what a draftsman most valued in his model was the faculty of keeping quiet.

"Oh, *she* can keep quiet," said Major Monarch. Then he added jocosely: "I've always kept her quiet."

"I'm not a nasty fidget, am I?" It was going to wring tears from me, I felt, the way she hid her head, ostrichlike, in the other broad bosom.

The owner of this expanse addressed his answer to me. "Perhaps it isn't out of place to mention—because we ought to be quite businesslike, oughtn't we?—that when I married her she was known as the Beautiful Statue."

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Monarch ruefully.

"Of course I should want a certain amount of expression," I rejoined.

"Of *course!*"—and I had never heard such unanimity.

"And then I suppose you know that you'll get awfully tired."

"Oh, we *never* get tired!" they eagerly cried.

"Have you had any kind of practice?"

They hesitated—they looked at each other. "We've been photographed—*immensely*," said Mrs. Monarch.

"She means the fellows have asked us themselves," added the Major.

"I see—because you're so good-looking."

"I don't know what they thought, but they were always after us."

"We always got our photographs for nothing," smiled Mrs. Monarch.

"We might have brought some, my dear," her husband remarked.

"I'm not sure we have any left. We've given quantities away," she explained to me.

"With our autographs and that sort of thing," said the Major.

"Are they to be got in the shops?" I inquired as a harmless pleasantry.

"Oh, yes, *hers*—they used to be."

"Not now," said Mrs. Monarch with her eyes on the floor.

II

I could fancy the "sort of thing" they put on the presentation copies of their photographs, and I was sure they wrote a beautiful hand. It was odd how quickly I was sure of everything that concerned them. If they were now so poor as to have to earn shillings and pence they could never have had much of a margin. Their good looks had been their capital, and they had good-humoredly made the most of the career that this resource marked out for them. It was in their faces, the blankness, the deep intellectual repose of the twenty years of country-house visiting that had given them pleasant intonations. I could see the sunny drawing rooms, sprinkled with periodicals she didn't read, in which Mrs. Monarch had continuously sat; I could see the wet shrubberies in which she had walked, equipped to admiration for either exercise. I could see the rich covers the Major had helped to shoot and the wonderful garments in which, late at night, he repaired to the smoking room to talk about them. I could imagine their leggings and waterproofs, their knowing tweeds and rugs, their rolls of sticks and cases of tackle and neat umbrellas; and I could evoke the exact appearance of their servants and the compact variety of their luggage on the platforms of country stations.

They gave small tips, but they were liked; they didn't do anything themselves, but they were welcome. They looked so well everywhere; they gratified the general relish for stature, complexion, and "form." They knew it without fatuity or vulgarity, and they respected themselves in consequence. They weren't superficial; they were thorough and kept themselves up—it had been their line. People with such a taste for activity had to have some line. I could feel how even in a dull house they could have been counted on for the joy of life. At present something had happened—it didn't matter what, their little income had grown less, it had grown least—and they had to do something for pocket money. Their friends could like them,

I made out, without liking to support them. There was something about them that represented credit—their clothes, their manners, their type; but if credit is a large, empty pocket in which an occasional chink reverberates, the chink at least must be audible. What they wanted of me was help to make it so. Fortunately they had no children—I soon divined that. They would also perhaps wish our relations to be kept secret: this was why it was “for the figure”—the reproduction of the face would betray them.

I liked them—I felt, quite as their friends must have done—they were so simple; and I had no objection to them if they would suit. But somehow with all their perfections I didn’t easily believe in them. After all they were amateurs, and the ruling passion of my life was the detestation of the amateur. Combined with this was another perversity—an innate preference for the represented subject over the real one: the defect of the real one was so apt to be a lack of representation. I liked things that appeared; then one was sure. Whether they *were* or not was a subordinate and almost always a profitless question. There were other considerations, the first of which was that I already had two or three recruits in use, notably a young person with big feet, in alpaca, from Kilburn, who for a couple of years had come to me regularly for my illustrations and with whom I was still—perhaps ignobly—satisfied. I frankly explained to my visitors how the case stood, but they had taken more precautions than I supposed. They had reasoned out their opportunity, for Claude Rivet had told them of the projected edition de luxe of one of the writers of our day—the rarest of the novelists—who, long neglected by the multitudinous vulgar and dearly prized by the attentive (need I mention Philip Vincent?), had had the happy fortune of seeing, late in life, the dawn and then the full light of a higher criticism; an estimate in which on the part of the public there was something really of expiation. The edition preparing, planned by a publisher of taste, was practically an act of high reparation; the woodcuts with which it was to be enriched were the homage of English art to one of the most independent representatives of English

letters. Major and Mrs. Monarch confessed to me they had hoped I might be able to work *them* into my branch of the enterprise. They knew I was to do the first of the books, *Rutland Ramsay*, but I had to make clear to them that my participation in the rest of the affair—this first book was to be a test—must depend on the satisfaction I should give. If this should be limited, my employers would drop me with scarce common forms. It was therefore a crisis for me, and naturally I was making special preparations, looking about for new people, should they be necessary, and securing the best types. I admitted, however, that I should like to settle down to two or three good models who would do for everything.

"Should we have often to—a—put on special clothes?" Mrs. Monarch timidly demanded.

"Dear, yes—that's half the business."

"And should we be expected to supply our own costumes?"

"Oh, no; I've got a lot of things. A painter's models put on—or put off—anything he likes."

"And you mean—a—the same?"

"The same?"

Mrs. Monarch looked at her husband again.

"Oh, she was just wondering," he explained, "if the costumes are in *general* use." I had to confess that they were, and I mentioned further that some of them—I had a lot of genuine greasy last-century things—had served their time, a hundred years ago, on living world-stained men and women; on figures not perhaps so far removed, in that vanished world, from *their* type, the Monarchs', *quoi!* of a breeched and bewigged age. "We'll put on anything that *fits*," said the Major.

"Oh, I arrange that—they fit in the pictures."

"I'm afraid I should do better for the modern books. I'd come as you like," said Mrs. Monarch.

"She has got a lot of clothes at home: they might do for contemporary life," her husband continued.

"Oh, I can fancy scenes in which you'd be quite natural." And indeed I could see the slipshod rearrangements of stale properties—the stories I tried to produce pictures for without

the exasperation of reading them—whose sandy tracts the good lady might help to people. But I had to return to the fact that for this sort of work—the daily mechanical grind—I was already equipped: the people I was working with were fully adequate.

“We only thought we might be more like *some* characters,” said Mrs. Monarch mildly, getting up.

Her husband also rose; he stood looking at me with a dim wistfulness that was touching in so fine a man. “Wouldn’t it be rather a pull sometimes to have—a—to have——?” He hung fire; he wanted me to help him by phrasing what he meant. But I couldn’t—I didn’t know. So he brought it out awkwardly: “The *real* thing; a gentleman, you know, or a lady.” I was quite ready to give a general assent—I admitted that there was a great deal in that. This encouraged Major Monarch to say, following up his appeal with an unacted gulp: “It’s awfully hard—we’ve tried everything.” The gulp was communicative; it proved too much for his wife. Before I knew it Mrs. Monarch had dropped again upon a divan and burst into tears. Her husband sat down beside her, holding one of her hands; whereupon she quickly dried her eyes with the other, while I felt embarrassed as she looked up at me. “There isn’t a confounded job I haven’t applied for—waited for—prayed for. You can fancy we’d be pretty bad first. Secretaryships and that sort of thing? You might as well ask for a peerage. I’d be *anything*—I’m strong; a messenger or a coalheaver. I’d put on a gold-laced cap and open carriage doors in front of the haberdasher’s; I’d hang about a station to carry portmanteaus; I’d be a postman. But they won’t *look* at you; there are thousands as good as yourself already on the ground. *Gentlemen*, poor beggars, who’ve drunk their wine, who’ve kept their hunters!”

I was as reassuring as I knew how to be, and my visitors were presently on their feet again while, for the *experiment*, we agreed on an hour. We were discussing it when the door opened and Miss Churm came in with a wet umbrella. Miss Churm had to take the omnibus to Maida Vale and then walk half a mile. She looked a trifle blowsy and slightly splashed. I scarcely ever saw her come in without thinking afresh how

odd it was that, being so little in herself, she should yet be so much in others. She was a meager little Miss Churm, but was such an ample heroine of romance. She was only a freckled cockney, but she could represent everything, from a fine lady to a shepherdess; she had the faculty as she might have had a fine voice or long hair. She couldn't spell and she loved beer, but she had two or three "points," and practice, and a knack, and mother wit, and a whimsical sensibility, and a love of the theater, and seven sisters, and not an ounce of respect, especially for the *h*. The first thing my visitors saw was that her umbrella was wet, and in their spotless perfection they visibly winced at it. The rain had come on since their arrival.

"I'm all in a soak; there *was* a mess of people in the 'bus. I wish you lived near a stytion," said Miss Churm. I requested her to get ready as quickly as possible, and she passed into the room in which she always changed her dress. But before going out she asked me what she was to get into this time.

"It's the Russian princess, don't you know?" I answered; "the one with the 'golden eyes,' in black velvet, for the long thing in the *Cheapside*."

"Golden eyes? I *say*!" cried Miss Churm, while my companions watched her with intensity as she withdrew. She always arranged herself, when she was late, before I could turn round; and I kept my visitors a little on purpose, so that they might get an idea, from seeing her, what would be expected of themselves. I mentioned that she was quite my notion of an excellent model—she was really very clever.

"Do you think she looks like a Russian princess?" Major Monarch asked with lurking alarm.

"When I make her, yes."

"Oh, if you have to *make* her——!" he reasoned, not without point.

"That's the most you can ask. There are so many who are not makeable."

"Well, now, *here's* a lady"—and with a persuasive smile he passed his arm into his wife's—"who's already made!"

"Oh, I'm not a Russian princess," Mrs. Monarch protested

a little coldly. I could see she had known some and didn't like them. There at once was a complication of a kind I never had to fear with Miss Churm.

This young lady came back in black velvet—the gown was rather rusty and very low on her lean shoulders—and with a Japanese fan in her red hands. I reminded her that in the scene I was doing she had to look over someone's head. "I forget whose it is; but it doesn't matter. Just look over a head."

"I'd rather look over a stove," said Miss Churm; and she took her station near the fire. She fell into position, settled herself into a tall attitude, gave a certain backward inclination to her head and a certain forward droop to her fan, and looked, at least to my prejudiced sense, distinguished and charming, foreign and dangerous. We left her looking so while I went downstairs with Major and Mrs. Monarch.

"I believe I could come about as near it as that," said Mrs. Monarch.

"Oh, you think she's shabby, but you must allow for the alchemy of art."

However, they went off with an evident increase of comfort founded on their demonstrable advantage in being the real thing. I could fancy them shuddering over Miss Churm. She was very droll about them when I went back, for I told her what they wanted.

"Well, if *she* can sit I'll tyke to bookkeeping," said my model.

"She's very ladylike," I replied as an innocent form of aggravation.

"So much the worse for *you*. That means she can't turn round."

"She'll do for the fashionable novels."

"Oh, yes, she'll *do* for them!" my model humorously declared. "Ain't they bad enough without her?" I had often sociably denounced them to Miss Churm.

III

It was for the elucidation of a mystery in one of these works that I first tried Mrs. Monarch. Her husband came with her,

to be useful if necessary—it was sufficiently clear that as a general thing he would prefer to come with her. At first I wondered if this were for “propriety’s” sake—if he were going to be jealous and meddling. The idea was too tiresome, and if it had been confirmed it would speedily have brought our acquaintance to a close. But I soon saw there was nothing in it and that if he accompanied Mrs. Monarch it was—in addition to the chance of being wanted—simply because he had nothing else to do. When they were separate his occupation was gone, and they never *had* been separate. I judged rightly that in their awkward situation their close union was their main comfort and that this union had no weak spot. It was a real marriage, an encouragement to the hesitating, a nut for pessimists to crack. Their address was humble—I remember afterwards thinking it had been the only thing about them that was really professional—and I could fancy the lamentable lodgings in which the Major would have been left alone. He could sit there more or less grimly with his wife—he couldn’t sit there anyhow without her.

He had too much tact to try and make himself agreeable when he couldn’t be useful; so when I was too absorbed in my work to talk he simply sat and waited. But I liked to hear him talk—it made my work, when not interrupting it, less mechanical, less special. To listen to him was to combine the excitement of going out with the economy of staying at home. There was only one hindrance—that I seemed not to know any of the people this brilliant couple had known. I think he wondered extremely, during the term of our intercourse, whom the deuce I *did* know. He hadn’t a stray sixpence of an idea to fumble for, so we didn’t spin it very fine; we confined ourselves to questions of leather and even of liquor—saddlers and breeches makers and how to get excellent claret cheap—and matters like “good trains” and the habits of small game. His lore on these last subjects was astonishing—he managed to interweave the stationmaster with the ornithologist. When he couldn’t talk about greater things he could talk cheerfully about smaller, and since I couldn’t accompany him into remi-

niscences of the fashionable world he could lower the conversation without a visible effort to my level.

So earnest a desire to please was touching in a man who could so easily have knocked one down. He looked after the fire and had an opinion on the draft of the stove without my asking him, and I could see that he thought many of my arrangements not half knowing. I remember telling him that if I were only rich I'd offer him a salary to come and teach me how to live. Sometimes he gave a random sigh of which the essence might have been: "Give me even such a bare old barrack as *this*, and I'd do something with it!" When I wanted to use him he came alone; which was an illustration of the superior courage of women. His wife could bear her solitary second floor, and she was in general more discreet; showing by various small reserves that she was alive to the propriety of keeping our relations markedly professional—not letting them slide into sociability. She wished it to remain clear that she and the Major were employed, not cultivated, and if she approved of me as a superior, who could be kept in his place, she never thought me quite good enough for an equal.

She sat with great intensity, giving the whole of her mind to it, and was capable of remaining for an hour almost as motionless as before a photographer's lens. I could see she had been photographed often, but somehow the very habit that made her good for that purpose unfitted her for mine. At first I was extremely pleased with her ladylike air, and it was a satisfaction, on coming to follow her lines, to see how good they were and how far they could lead the pencil. But after a little skirmishing I began to find her too insurmountably stiff; do what I would with it my drawing looked like a photograph or a copy of a photograph. Her figure had no variety of expression—she herself had no sense of variety. You may say that *this* was my business and was only a question of placing her. Yet I placed her in every conceivable position and she managed to obliterate their differences. She was always a lady certainly, and into the bargain was always the same lady. She was the real thing, but always the same thing. There were moments when I

rather writhed under the serenity of her confidence that she *was* the real thing. All her dealings with me and all her husband's were an implication that this was lucky for *me*. Meanwhile I found myself trying to invent types that approached her own, instead of making her own transform itself—in the clever way that was not impossible for instance to poor Miss Churm. Arrange as I would and take the precautions I would, she always came out, in my pictures, too tall—landing me in the dilemma of having represented a fascinating woman as seven feet high, which (out of respect perhaps to my own very much scantier inches) was far from my idea of such a personage.

The case was worse with the Major—nothing I could do would keep *him* down, so that he became useful only for the representation of brawny giants. I adored variety and range, I cherished human accidents, the illustrative note; I wanted to characterize closely, and the thing in the world I most hated was the danger of being ridden by a type. I had quarreled with some of my friends about it; I had parted company with them for maintaining that one *had* to be, and that if the type was beautiful—witness Raphael and Leonardo—the servitude was only a gain. I was neither Leonardo nor Raphael—I might only be a presumptuous young modern searcher; but I held that everything was to be sacrificed sooner than character. When they claimed that the obsessional form could easily *be* character I retorted, perhaps superficially, "Whose?" It couldn't be everybody's—it might end in being nobody's.

After I had drawn Mrs. Monarch a dozen times I felt surer even than before that the value of such a model as Miss Churm resided precisely in the fact that she had no positive stamp, combined of course with the other fact that what she did have was a curious and inexplicable talent for imitation. Her usual appearance was like a curtain which she could draw up at request for a capital performance. This performance was simply suggestive; but it was a word to the wise—it was vivid and pretty. Sometimes even I thought it, though she was plain herself, too insipidly pretty; I made it a reproach to her that the

figures drawn from her were monotonously (*bêtement*, as we used to say) graceful. Nothing made her more angry: it was so much her pride to feel she could sit for characters that had nothing in common with each other. She would accuse me at such moments of taking away her "reputation."

It suffered a certain shrinkage, this queer quantity, from the repeated visits of my new friends. Miss Churm was greatly in demand, never in want of employment, so I had no scruple in putting her off occasionally, to try them more at my ease. It was certainly amusing at first to do the real thing—it was amusing to do Major Monarch's trousers. They *were* the real thing, even if he did come out colossal. It was amusing to do his wife's back hair—it was so mathematically neat—and the particular "smart" tension of her tight stays. She lent herself especially to positions in which the face was somewhat averted or blurred; she abounded in ladylike back views and *profils perdus*. When she stood erect she took naturally one of the attitudes in which court painters represent queens and princesses; so that I found myself wondering whether, to draw out this accomplishment, I couldn't get the editor of the *Cheapside* to publish a really royal romance, "A Tale of Buckingham Palace." Sometimes, however, the real thing and the make-believe came into contact; by which I mean that Miss Churm, keeping an appointment or coming to make one on days when I had much work in hand, encountered her invidious rivals. The encounter was not on their part, for they noticed her no more than if she had been the housemaid; not from intentional loftiness, but simply because as yet, professionally, they didn't know how to fraternize, as I could imagine they would have liked—or at least that the Major would. They couldn't talk about the omnibus—they always walked; and they didn't know what else to try—she wasn't interested in good trains or cheap claret. Besides, they must have felt—in the air—that she was amused at them, secretly derisive of their ever knowing how. She wasn't a person to conceal the limits of her faith if she had had a chance to show them. On the other hand Mrs. Monarch didn't think her tidy; for why else did she take pains to say

to me—it was going out of the way, for Mrs. Monarch—that she didn't like dirty women?

One day when my young lady happened to be present with my other sitters—she even dropped in, when it was convenient, for a chat—I asked her to be so good as to lend a hand in getting tea, a service with which she was familiar and which was one of a class that, living as I did in a small way, with slender domestic resources, I often appealed to my models to render. They liked to lay hands on my property, to break the sitting, and sometimes the china—it made them feel Bohemian. The next time I saw Miss Churm after this incident she surprised me greatly by making a scene about it—she accused me of having wished to humiliate her. She hadn't resented the outrage at the time, but had seemed obliging and amused, enjoying the comedy of asking Mrs. Monarch, who sat vague and silent, whether she would have cream and sugar, and putting an exaggerated *simper* into the question. She had tried intonations—as if she too wished to pass for the real thing—till I was afraid my other visitors would take offense.

Oh, they were determined not to do this, and their touching patience was the measure of their great need. They would sit by the hour, uncomplaining, till I was ready to use them; they would come back on the chance of being wanted and would walk away cheerfully if it failed. I used to go to the door with them to see in what magnificent order they retreated. I tried to find other employment for them—I introduced them to several artists. But they didn't "take," for reasons I could appreciate, and I became rather anxiously aware that after such disappointments they fell back upon me with a heavier weight. They did me the honor to think me most *their* form. They weren't romantic enough for the painters, and in those days there were few serious workers in black and white. Besides, they had an eye to the great job I had mentioned to them—they had secretly set their hearts on supplying the right essence for my pictorial vindication of our fine novelist. They knew that for this undertaking I should want no costume effects, none of the frippery of past ages—that it was a case in which everything

would be contemporary and satirical and presumably genteel. If I could work them into it their future would be assured, for the labor would of course be long and the occupation steady.

One day Mrs. Monarch came without her husband—she explained his absence by his having had to go to the City. While she sat there in her usual relaxed majesty there came at the door a knock which I immediately recognized as the subdued appeal of a model out of work. It was followed by the entrance of a young man whom I at once saw to be a foreigner and who proved in fact an Italian acquainted with no English word but my name, which he uttered in a way that made it seem to include all others. I hadn't then visited his country, nor was I proficient in his tongue; but as he was not so meanly constituted—what Italian is?—as to depend only on that member for expression he conveyed to me, in familiar but graceful mimicry, that he was in search of exactly the employment in which the lady before me was engaged. I was not struck with him at first, and while I continued to draw I dropped few signs of interest or encouragement. He stood his ground, however—not importunately, but with a dumb, doglike fidelity in his eyes that amounted to innocent impudence, the manner of a devoted servant—he might have been in the house for years—unjustly suspected. Suddenly it struck me that this very attitude and expression made a picture; whereupon I told him to sit down and wait till I should be free. There was another picture in the way he obeyed me, and I observed as I worked that there were others still in the way he looked wonderingly, with his head thrown back, about the high studio. He might have been crossing himself in Saint Peter's. Before I finished I said to myself, "The fellow's a bankrupt orange monger, but a treasure."

When Mrs. Monarch withdrew he passed across the room like a flash to open the door for her, standing there with the rapt, pure gaze of the young Dante spellbound by the young Beatrice. As I never insisted, in such situations, on the blankness of the British domestic, I reflected that he had the making of a servant—and I needed one, but couldn't pay him to be

only that—as well as of a model; in short I resolved to adopt my bright adventurer if he would agree to officiate in the double capacity. He jumped at my offer, and in the event my rashness—for I had really known nothing about him—wasn't brought home to me. He proved a sympathetic though a desultory ministrant, and had in a wonderful degree the *senti-ment de la pose*. It was uncultivated, instinctive, a part of the happy instinct that had guided him to my door and helped him to spell out my name on the card nailed to it. He had had no other introduction to me than a guess, from the shape of my high north window, seen outside, that my place was a studio and that as a studio it would contain an artist. He had wandered to England in search of fortune, like other itinerants, and had embarked, with a partner and a small green handcart, on the sale of penny ices. The ices had melted away and the partner had dissolved in their train. My young man wore tight yellow trousers with reddish stripes and his name was Oronte. He was sallow but fair, and when I put him into some old clothes of my own he looked like an Englishman. He was as good as Miss Churm, who could look, when requested, like an Italian.

IV

I thought Mrs. Monarch's face slightly convulsed when, on her coming back with her husband, she found Oronte installed. It was strange to have to recognize in a scrap of a lazzarone a competitor to her magnificent Major. It was she who scented danger first, for the Major was anecdotically unconscious. But Oronte gave us tea, with a hundred eager confusions—he had never been concerned in so queer a process—and I think she thought better of me for having at last an "establishment." They saw a couple of drawings that I had made of the establishment, and Mrs. Monarch hinted that it never would have struck her he had sat for them. "Now the drawings you make from *us*, they look exactly like *us*," she reminded me, smiling in triumph; and I recognized that this was indeed just their defect. When I drew the Monarchs I couldn't anyhow get

away from them—get into the character I wanted to represent; and I hadn't the least desire my model should be discoverable in my picture. Miss Churm never was, and Mrs. Monarch thought I hid her, very properly, because she was vulgar; whereas if she was lost it was only as the dead who go to heaven are lost—in the gain of an angel the more.

By this time I had got a certain start with *Rutland Ramsay*, the first novel in the great projected series; that is, I had produced a dozen drawings, several with the help of the Major and his wife, and I had sent them in for approval. My understanding with the publishers, as I have already hinted, had been that I was to be left to do my work, in this particular case, as I liked, with the whole book committed to me; but my connection with the rest of the series was only contingent. There were moments when, frankly, it *was* a comfort to have the real thing under one's hand; for there were characters in *Rutland Ramsay* that were very much like it. There were people presumably as erect as the Major and women of as good a fashion as Mrs. Monarch. There was a great deal of country-house life—treated, it is true, in a fine, fanciful, ironical, generalized way—and there was a considerable implication of knickerbockers and kilts. There were certain things I had to settle at the outset; such things, for instance, as the exact appearance of the hero and the particular bloom and figure of the heroine. The author of course gave me a lead, but there was a margin for interpretation. I took the Monarchs into my confidence, I told them frankly what I was about, I mentioned my embarrassments and alternatives. "Oh, take *him*!" Mrs. Monarch murmured sweetly, looking at her husband; and "What could you want better than my wife?" the Major inquired with the comfortable candor that now prevailed between us.

I wasn't obliged to answer these remarks—I was only obliged to place my sitters. I wasn't easy in mind, and I postponed a little timidly perhaps the solving of my question. The book was a large canvas, the other figures were numerous, and I worked off at first some of the episodes in which the hero and the heroine were not concerned. When once I had set *them* up

I should have to stick to them—I couldn't make my young man seven feet high in one place and five feet nine in another. I inclined on the whole to the latter measurement, though the Major more than once reminded me that *he* looked about as young as anyone. It was indeed quite possible to arrange him, for the figure, so that it would have been difficult to detect his age. After the spontaneous Oronte had been with me a month, and after I had given him to understand several times over that his native exuberance would presently constitute an insurmountable barrier to our further intercourse, I waked to a sense of his heroic capacity. He was only five feet seven, but the remaining inches were latent. I tried him almost secretly at first, for I was really rather afraid of the judgment my other models would pass on such a choice. If they regarded Miss Churm as little better than a snare, what would they think of the representation by a person so little the real thing as an Italian street vendor of a protagonist formed by a public school?

If I went a little in fear of them it wasn't because they bullied me, because they had got an oppressive foothold, but because in their really pathetic decorum and mysteriously permanent newness they counted on me so intensely. I was therefore very glad when Jack Hawley came home: he was always of such good counsel. He painted badly himself, but there was no one like him for putting his finger on the place. He had been absent from England for a year; he had been somewhere—I don't remember where—to get a fresh eye. I was in a good deal of dread of any such organ, but we were old friends; he had been away for months and a sense of emptiness was creeping into my life. I hadn't dodged a missile for a year.

He came back with a fresh eye, but with the same old black velvet blouse, and the first evening he spent in my studio we smoked cigarettes till the small hours. He had done no work himself, he had only got the eye; so the field was clear for the production of my little things. He wanted to see what I had produced for the *Cheapside*, but he was disappointed in the exhibition. That at least seemed the meaning of two or three

comprehensive groans which, as he lounged on my big divan, his leg folded under him, looking at my latest drawings, issued from his lips with the smoke of the cigarette.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked.

"What's the matter with *you*?"

"Nothing save that I'm mystified."

"You are indeed. You're quite off the hinge. What's the meaning of this new fad?" And he tossed me, with visible irreverence, a drawing in which I happened to have depicted both my elegant models. I asked if he didn't think it good, and he replied that it struck him as execrable, given the sort of thing I had always represented myself to him as wishing to arrive at; but I let that pass—I was so anxious to see exactly what he meant. The two figures in the picture looked colossal, but I supposed this was *not* what he meant, inasmuch as, for aught he knew to the contrary, I might have been trying for some such effect. I maintained that I was working exactly in the same way as when he last had done me the honor to tell me I might do something some day. "Well, there's a screw loose somewhere," he answered; "wait a bit and I'll discover it." I depended upon him to do so: where else was the fresh eye? But he produced at last nothing more luminous than "I don't know—I don't like your types." This was lame for a critic who had never consented to discuss with me anything but the question of execution, the direction of strokes and the mystery of values.

"In the drawings you've been looking at I think my types are very handsome."

"Oh, they won't do!"

"I've been working with new models."

"I see you have. *They* won't do."

"Are you very sure of that?"

"Absolutely—they're stupid."

"You mean *I* am—for I ought to get round that."

"You *can't*—with such people. Who are they?"

I told him, so far as was necessary, and he concluded heartlessly: "*Ce sont des gens qu'il faut mettre à la porte.*"

"You've never seen them; they're awfully good"—I flew to their defense.

"Not seen them? Why all this recent work of yours drops to pieces with them. It's all I want to see of them."

"No one else has said anything against it—the *Cheapside* people are pleased."

"Everyone else is an ass, and the *Cheapside* people the biggest asses of all. Come, don't pretend at this time of day to have pretty illusions about the public, especially about publishers and editors. It's not for *such* animals you work—it's for those who know, *coloro che sanno*; so keep straight for *me* if you can't keep straight for yourself. There was a certain sort of thing you used to try for—and a very good thing it was. But this twaddle isn't *in* it." When I talked with Hawley later about *Rutland Ramsay* and its possible successors he declared that I must get back into my boat again or I should go to the bottom. His voice in short was the voice of warning.

I noted the warning, but I didn't turn my friends out of doors. They bored me a good deal; but the very fact that they bored me admonished me not to sacrifice them—if there was anything to be done with them—simply to irritation. As I look back at this phase, they seem to me to have pervaded my life not a little. I have a vision of them as most of the time in my studio, seated against the wall on an old velvet bench to be out of the way, and resembling the while a pair of patient courtiers in a royal antechamber. I'm convinced that during the coldest weeks of the winter they held their ground because it saved them fire. Their newness was losing its gloss, and it was impossible not to feel them objects of charity. Whenever Miss Churm arrived they went away, and after I was fairly launched in *Rutland Ramsay* Miss Churm arrived pretty often. They managed to express to me tacitly that they supposed I wanted her for the low life of the book, and I let them suppose it, since they had attempted to study the work—it was lying about the studio—without discovering that it dealt only with the highest circles. They had dipped into the most brilliant of our novelists without deciphering many passages. I still took an hour from them,

now and again, in spite of Jack Hawley's warning: it would be time enough to dismiss them, if dismissal should be necessary, when the rigor of the season was over. Hawley had made their acquaintance—he had met them at my fireside—and thought them a ridiculous pair. Learning that he was a painter they tried to approach him, to show him too that they were the real thing; but he looked at them, across the big room, as if they were miles away: they were a compendium of everything he most objected to in the social system of his country. Such people as that, all convention and patent leather, with ejaculations that stopped conversation, had no business in a studio. A studio was a place to learn to see, and how could you see through a pair of feather beds?

The main inconvenience I suffered at their hands was that at first I was shy of letting it break upon them that my artful little servant had begun to sit to me for *Rutland Ramsay*. They knew I had been odd enough—they were prepared by this time to allow oddity to artists—to pick a foreign vagabond out of the streets when I might have had a person with whiskers and credentials; but it was some time before they learned how high I rated his accomplishments. They found him in an attitude more than once, but they never doubted I was doing him as an organ-grinder. There were several things they never guessed, and one of them was that for a striking scene in the novel, in which a footman briefly figured, it occurred to me to make use of Major Monarch as the menial. I kept putting this off, I didn't like to ask him to don the livery—besides the difficulty of finding a livery to fit him. At last, one day late in the winter, when I was at work on the despised *Oronte*, who caught one's idea on the wing, and was in the glow of feeling myself go very straight, they came in, the Major and his wife, with their society laugh about nothing (there was less and less to laugh at); came in like country callers—they always reminded me of that—who have walked across the park after church and are presently persuaded to stay to luncheon. Luncheon was over, but they could stay to tea—I knew they wanted it. The fit was on me, however, and I couldn't let my ardor cool and my work wait,

with the fading daylight, while my model prepared it. So I asked Mrs. Monarch if she would mind laying it out—a request which for an instant brought all the blood to her face. Her eyes were on her husband's for a second, and some mute telegraphy passed between them. Their folly was over the next instant; his cheerful shrewdness put an end to it. So far from pitying their wounded pride, I must add, I was moved to give it as complete a lesson as I could. They bustled about together and got out the cups and saucers and made the kettle boil. I know they felt as if they were waiting on my servant, and when the tea was prepared I said: "He'll have a cup, please—he's tired." Mrs. Monarch brought him one where he stood, and he took it from her as if he had been a gentleman at a party squeezing a crush hat with an elbow.

Then it came over me that she had made a great effort for me—made it with a kind of nobleness—and that I owed her a compensation. Each time I saw her after this I wondered what the compensation could be. I couldn't go on doing the wrong thing to oblige them. Oh, it *was* the wrong thing, the stamp of the work for which they sat—Hawley was not the only person to say it now. I sent in a large number of the drawings I had made for *Rutland Ramsay*, and I received a warning that was more to the point than Hawley's. The artistic adviser of the house for which I was working was of opinion that many of my illustrations were not what had been looked for. Most of these illustrations were the subjects in which the Monarchs had figured. Without going into the question of what *had* been looked for, I had to face the fact that at this rate I shouldn't get the other books to do. I hurled myself in despair on Miss Churm—I put her through all her paces. I not only adopted Oronte publicly as my hero, but one morning when the Major looked in to see if I didn't require him to finish a *Cheapside* figure for which he had begun to sit the week before, I told him I had changed my mind—I'd do the drawing from my man. At this my visitor turned pale and stood looking at me. "Is *he* your idea of an English gentleman?" he asked.

I was disappointed, I was nervous, I wanted to get on with

my work; so I replied with irritation: "Oh, my dear Major—I can't be ruined for *you*."

It was a horrid speech, but he stood another moment—after which, without a word, he quitted the studio. I drew a long breath, for I said to myself that I shouldn't see him again. I hadn't told him definitely that I was in danger of having my work rejected, but I was vexed at his not having felt the catastrophe in the air, read with me the moral of our fruitless collaboration, the lesson that in the deceptive atmosphere of art even the highest respectability may fail of being plastic.

I didn't owe my friends money, but I did see them again. They reappeared together three days later, and, given all the other facts, there was something tragic in that one. It was a clear proof they could find nothing else in life to do. They had threshed the matter out in a dismal conference—they had digested the bad news that they were not in for the series. If they weren't useful to me even for the *Cheapside*, their function seemed difficult to determine, and I could only judge at first that they had come, forgivingly, decorously, to take a last leave. This made me rejoice in secret that I had little leisure for a scene; for I had placed both my other models in position together and I was pegging away at a drawing from which I hoped to derive glory. It had been suggested by the passage in which Rutland Ramsay, drawing up a chair to Artemisia's piano stool, says extraordinary things to her while she ostensibly fingers out a difficult piece of music. I had done Miss Churm at the piano before—it was an attitude in which she knew how to take on an absolutely poetic grace. I wished the two figures to "compose" together with intensity, and my little Italian had entered perfectly into my conception. The pair were vividly before me, the piano had been pulled out; it was a charming show of blended youth and murmured love, which I had only to catch and keep. My visitors stood and looked at it, and I was friendly to them over my shoulder.

They made no response, but I was used to silent company and went on with my work, only a little disconcerted—even though exhilarated by the sense that *this* was at least the ideal

thing—at not having got rid of them after all. Presently I heard Mrs. Monarch's sweet voice beside or rather above me: "I wish her hair were a little better done." I looked up and she was staring with a strange fixedness at Miss Churm, whose back was turned to her. "Do you mind my just touching it?" she went on—a question which made me spring up for an instant as with the instinctive fear that she might do the young lady a harm. But she quieted me with a glance I shall never forget—I confess I should like to have been able to paint *that*—and went for a moment to my model. She spoke to her softly, laying a hand on her shoulder and bending over her; and as the girl, understanding, gratefully assented, she disposed her rough curls, with a few quick passes, in such a way as to make Miss Churm's head twice as charming. It was one of the most heroic personal services I've ever seen rendered. Then Mrs. Monarch turned away with a low sigh and, looking about her as if for something to do, stooped to the floor with a noble humility and picked up a dirty rag that had dropped out of my paint box.

The Major meanwhile had also been looking for something to do, and, wandering to the other end of the studio, saw before him my breakfast things neglected, unremoved. "I say, can't I be useful *here?*" he called out to me with an irrepressible quaver. I assented with a laugh that I fear was awkward, and for the next ten minutes, while I worked, I heard the light clatter of china and the tinkle of spoons and glass. Mrs. Monarch assisted her husband—they washed up my crockery, they put it away. They wandered off into my little scullery, and I afterwards found that they had cleaned my knives and that my slender stock of plate had an unprecedented surface. When it came over me, the latent eloquence of what they were doing, I confess that my drawing was blurred for a moment—the picture swam. They had accepted their failure, but they couldn't accept their fate. They had bowed their heads in bewilderment to the perverse and cruel law in virtue of which the real thing could be so much less precious than the unreal; but they didn't want to starve. If my servants were my models, then my models might be my servants. They would reverse

the parts—the others would sit for the ladies and gentlemen and *they* would do the work. They would still be in the studio—it was an intense dumb appeal to me not to turn them out. “Take us on,” they wanted to say—“we’ll do *anything*.”

My pencil dropped from my hand; my sitting was spoiled and I got rid of my sitters, who were also evidently rather mystified and awestruck. Then, alone with the Major and his wife I had a most uncomfortable moment. He put their prayer into a single sentence: “I say, you know—just let *us* do for you, can’t you?” I couldn’t—it was dreadful to see them emptying my slops; but I pretended I could, to oblige them, for about a week. Then I gave them a sum of money to go away, and I never saw them again. I obtained the remaining books, but my friend Hawley repeats that Major and Mrs. Monarch did me a permanent harm, got me into false ways. If it be true I’m content to have paid the price—for the memory.

THE NEXT TIME*

Mrs. Highmore's errand this morning was odd enough to deserve commemoration: she came to ask me to write a notice of her great forthcoming work. Her great works have come forth so frequently without my assistance that I was sufficiently entitled on this occasion to open my eyes; but what really made me stare was the ground on which her request reposed, and what prompts a note of the matter is the train of memory lighted by that explanation. Poor Ray Limbert, while we talked, seemed to sit there between us: she reminded me that my acquaintance with him had begun, eighteen years ago, with her having come in, precisely as she came today before luncheon, to bespeak my charity for him. If she didn't know then how little my charity was worth she's at least enlightened now, and this is just what makes the drollery of her visit. As I hold up the torch to the dusky years—by which I mean as I cipher up with a pen that stumbles and stops the figured column of my reminiscences—I see that Limbert's public hour, or at least my small apprehension of it, is rounded by those two occasions. It was *finis*, with a little moralizing flourish, that Mrs. Highmore seemed to trace today at the bottom of the page. "One of the most voluminous writers of the time," she has often repeated this sign; but never, I daresay, in spite of her professional command of appropriate emotion, with an equal sense of that mystery and that sadness of things which to people of imagination generally hover over the close of human histories. This romance at any rate is bracketed by her early and her late appeal; and when its melancholy protrusions had caught the declining light again from my half-hour's talk with her I took a private vow to recover while that light still lingers something of the delicate flush, to pick out with a brief patience the perplexing lesson.

*From *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*. New and Complete Edition, 35 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921-1923). Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

It was wonderful to see how for herself Mrs. Highmore had already done so: she wouldn't have hesitated to announce to me what was the matter with Ralph Limbert, or at all events to give me a glimpse of the high admonition she had read in his career. There could have been no better proof of the vividness of this parable, which we were really in our pleasant sympathy quite at one about, than that Mrs. Highmore, of all hardened sinners, should have been converted. It wasn't indeed news to me: she impressed on me that for the last ten years she had wanted to do something artistic, something as to which she was prepared not to care a rap whether or no it should sell. She brought home to me further that it had been mainly seeing what her brother-in-law did and how he did it that had wedded her to this perversity. As *he* didn't sell, dear soul, and as several persons, of whom I was one, thought highly of that, the fancy had taken her—taken her even quite early in her prolific course—of reaching, if only once, the same heroic eminence. She yearned to be, like Limbert, but of course only once, an exquisite failure. There was something a failure was, a failure in the market, that a success somehow wasn't. A success was as prosaic as a good dinner: there was nothing more to be said about it than that you had had it. Who but vulgar people, in such a case, made gloating remarks about the courses? It was often by such vulgar people that a success was attested. It made, if you came to look at it, nothing but money; that is, it made so much that any other result showed small in comparison. A failure now could make—oh, with the aid of immense talent of course, for there were failures and failures—such a reputation! She did me the honor—she had often done it—to intimate that what she meant by reputation was seeing *me* toss a flower. If it took a failure to catch a failure I was by my own admission well qualified to place the laurel. It was because she had made so much money and Mr. Highmore had taken such care of it that she could treat *herself* to an hour of pure glory. She perfectly remembered that as often as I had heard her heave that sigh I had been prompt with my declaration that a book sold might easily be as glorious as a book

unsold. Of course she knew this, but she knew also that it was the age of trash triumphant and that she had never heard me speak of anything that had "done well" exactly as she had sometimes heard me speak of something that hadn't—with just two or three words of respect which, when I used them, seemed to convey more than they commonly stood for, seemed to hush the discussion up a little, as for the very beauty of the secret.

I may declare in regard to these allusions that, whatever I then thought of myself as a holder of the scales, I had never scrupled to laugh out at the humor of Mrs. Highmore's pursuit of quality at any price. It had never rescued her even for a day from the hard doom of popularity, and though I never gave her my word for it there was no reason at all why it should. The public *would* have her, as her husband used roguishly to remark; not indeed that, making her bargains, standing up to her publishers, and even in his higher flights to her reviewers, he ever had a glimpse of her attempted conspiracy against her genius, or rather, as I may say, against mine. It wasn't that when she tried to be what she called subtle (for wasn't Limbert subtle, and wasn't I?); her fond consumers, bless them, didn't suspect the trick nor show what they thought of it: they straightway rose on the contrary to the morsel she had hoped to hold too high, and, making but a big cheerful bite of it, wagged their great collective tail artlessly for more. It was not given to her not to please, not granted even to her best refinements to affright. I had always respected the mystery of those humiliations, but I was fully aware this morning that they were practically the reason why she had come to me. Therefore when she said with the flush of a bold joke in her kind coarse face, "What I feel is, you know, that *you* could settle me if you only would," I knew quite well what she meant. She meant that of old it had always appeared to be the fine blade (as someone had hyperbolically called it) of my particular opinion that snapped the silken thread by which Limbert's chance in the market was wont to hang. She meant that my favor was compromising, that my praise indeed was fatal. I had cultivated the queer

habit of seeing nothing in certain celebrities, of seeing overmuch in an occasional nobody, and of judging from a point of view that, say what I would for it (and I had a monstrous deal to say), mostly remained perverse and obscure. Mine was in short the love that killed, for my subtlety, unlike Mrs. Highmore's, produced no tremor of the public tail. She hadn't forgotten how, toward the end, when his case was worst, Limbert would absolutely come to me with an odd shy pathos in his eyes and say: "My dear fellow, I think I've done it this time, if you'll only keep quiet." If my keeping quiet in those days was to help him to appear to have hit the usual taste, for the want of which he was starving, so now my breaking-out was to help Mrs. Highmore to appear to have hit the unusual.

The moral of all this was that I had frightened the public too much for our late friend, but that as she was not starving this was exactly what her grosser reputation required. And then, she good-naturedly and delicately intimated, there would always be, if further reasons were wanting, the price of my clever little article. I think she gave that hint with a flattering impression—spoiled child of the booksellers as she is—that the offered fee for my clever little articles is heavy. Whatever it is, at any rate, she had evidently reflected that poor Limbert's anxiety for his own profit used to involve my sacrificing mine. Any inconvenience that my obliging her might entail would not in fine be pecuniary. Her appeal, her motive, her fantastic thirst for quality and her ingenious theory of my influence struck me all as excellent comedy, and when I consented at hazard to oblige her she left me the sheets of her new novel. I could plead no inconvenience and have been looking them over; but I'm frankly appalled at what she expects of me. What's she thinking of, poor dear, and what has put it into her head that the muse of "quality" has ever sat with her for so much as three minutes? Why does she suppose that she has been "artistic"? She hasn't been anything whatever, I surmise, that she hasn't inveterately been. What does she imagine she has left out? What does she conceive she has put in? She has neither left out nor put in anything. I shall

have to write her an embarrassed note. The book doesn't exist and there's nothing in life to say about it. How can there be anything but the same old faithful rush for it?

1

This rush had already begun when, early in the seventies, in the interest of her prospective brother-in-law, she approached me on the singular ground of the unencouraged sentiment I had entertained for her sister. Pretty pink Maud had cast me out, but I appear to have passed in the flurried little circle for a magnanimous youth. Pretty pink Maud, so lovely then, before her troubles, that dusky Jane was gratefully conscious of all she made up for, Maud Stannace, very literary too, very languishing and extremely bullied by her mother, had yielded, invidiously as it might have struck me, to Ray Limbert's suit, which Mrs. Stannace wasn't the woman to stomach. Mrs. Stannace was seldom the woman to do anything: she had been shocked at the way her children, with the grubby taint of their father's blood—he had published *pâle* Remains or flat Conversations of *his* father—breathed the alien air of authorship. If not the daughter, nor even the niece, she was, if I'm not mistaken, the second cousin of a hundred earls and a great stickler for relationship, so that she had other views for her brilliant child, especially after her quiet one—such had been her original discreet forecast of the producer of eighty volumes—became the second wife of an ex-army-surgeon, already the father of four children. Mrs. Stannace had too manifestly dreamed it would be given to pretty pink Maud to detach some one of the noble hundred, who wouldn't be missed, from the cluster. It was because she cared only for cousins that I unlearned the way to her house, which she had once reminded me was one of the few paths of gentility I could hope to tread. Ralph Limbert, who belonged to nobody and had done nothing—nothing even at Cambridge—had only the uncanny spell he had cast on her younger daughter to recommend him; but if her younger daughter had a spark of filial feeling she wouldn't commit the indecency

of deserting for his sake a deeply dependent and intensely aggravated mother.

These things I learned from Jane Highmore, who, as if her books had been babies—they remained her only ones—had waited till after marriage to show what she could do, and now bade fair to surround her satisfied spouse (he took, for some mysterious reason, a part of the credit) with a little family, in sets of triplets, which properly handled would be the support of his declining years. The young couple, neither of whom had a penny, were now virtually engaged: the thing was subject to Ralph's putting his hand on some regular employment. People more enamored couldn't be conceived, and Mrs. Highmore, honest woman, who had moreover a professional sense for a love story, was eager to take them under her wing. What was wanted was a decent opening for Limbert, which it had occurred to her I might assist her to find, though indeed I had not yet found any such matter for myself. But it was well known that I was too particular, whereas poor Ralph, with the easy manners of genius, was ready to accept almost anything to which a salary, even a small one, was attached. If he could only for instance get a place on a newspaper, the rest of his maintenance would come freely enough. It was true that his two novels, one of which she had brought to leave with me, had passed unperceived, and that to her, Mrs. Highmore personally, they didn't irresistibly appeal; but she could all the same assure me that I should have only to spend ten minutes with him—and our encounter must speedily take place—to receive an impression of latent power.

Our encounter took place soon after I had read the volumes Mrs. Highmore had left with me, in which I recognized an intention of a sort that I had then pretty well given up the hope of meeting. I daresay that without knowing it I had been looking out rather hungrily for an altar of sacrifice: however that may be, I submitted when I came across Ralph Limbert to one of the rarest emotions of my literary life, the sense of an activity in which I could critically rest. The rest was deep and salutary, and has not been disturbed to this hour. It has been

a long, large surrender, the luxury of dropped discriminations. He couldn't trouble me, whatever he did, for I practically enjoyed him as much when he was worse as when he was better. It was a case, I suppose, of natural prearrangement, in which, I hasten to add, I keep excellent company. We're a numerous band, partakers of the same repose, who sit together in the shade of the tree, by the splash of the fountain, with the glare of the desert round us and no great vice that I know of but the habit perhaps of estimating people a little too much by what they think of a certain style. If it had been laid upon these few pages, none the less, to be the history of an enthusiasm, I shouldn't have undertaken them: they're concerned with Ralph Limbert in relations to which I was a stranger or in which I participated but by sympathy. I used to talk about his work, but I seldom talk now: the brotherhood of the faith have become, like the Trappists, a silent order. If to the day of his death, after mortal disenchantments, the impression he first produced always evoked the word "ingenuous," those to whom his face was familiar can easily imagine what it must have been when it still had the light of youth. I had never seen a man of genius show so for passive, a man of experience so off his guard. At the time I made his acquaintance this freshness was all unbrushed. His foot had begun to stumble, but he was full of big intentions and of sweet Maud Stannace. Black-haired and pale, deceptively languid, he had the eyes of a clever child and the voice of a bronze bell. He saw more even than I had done in the girl he was engaged to; as time went on I became conscious that we had both, properly enough, seen rather more than there was. Our odd situation, that of the three of us, became perfectly possible from the moment I recognized how much more patience he had with her than I should have had. I was happy at not having to supply this quantity, and she, on her side, found pleasure in being able to be impertinent to me without incurring the reproach of the bad wife.

Limbert's novels appeared to have brought him no money: they had only brought him, so far as I could then make out, tributes that took up his time. These indeed brought him

from several quarters some other things, and on my part at the end of three months the *Blackport Beacon*. I don't today remember how I obtained for him the London correspondence of the great northern organ, unless it was through somebody's having obtained it for myself. I seem to recall that I got rid of it in Limbert's interest, urging on the editor that he was much the better man. The better man was naturally the man who had pledged himself at the altar to provide for a charming woman. We were neither of us good, as the event proved, but he had the braver badness. The *Blackport Beacon* rejoiced in two London correspondents—one a supposed haunter of political circles, the other a votary of questions sketchily classified as literary. They were both expected to be lively, and what was held out to each was that it was honorably open to him to be livelier than the other. I recollect the political correspondent of that period and how the problem offered to Ray Limbert was to try to be livelier than Pat Moyle. He had not yet seemed to me so candid as when he undertook this exploit, which brought matters to a head with Mrs. Stannace, inasmuch as her opposition to the marriage now logically fell to the ground. It's all tears and laughter as I look back upon that admirable time, in which nothing was so romantic as our intense vision of the real. No fool's paradise ever rustled such a cradle-song. It was anything but Bohemia—it was the very temple of Mrs. Grundy. We knew we were too critical, and that made us sublimely indulgent; we believed we did our duty or wanted to, and that made us free to dream. But we dreamed over the multiplication table; we were nothing if not practical. Oh, the long smokes and sudden happy thoughts, the knowing hints and banished scruples! The great thing was for Limbert to bring out his next book, which was just what his delightful engagement with the *Beacon* would give him leisure and liberty to do. The kind of work, all human and elastic and suggestive, was capital experience: in picking up things for his biweekly letter he would pick up life as well, he would pick up literature. The new publications, the new pictures, the new people—there would be nothing too novel for us and nobody too sacred.

We introduced everything and everybody into Mrs. Stannace's drawing room, of which I again became a familiar.

Mrs. Stannace, it was true, thought herself in strange company; she didn't particularly mind the new books, though some of them seemed queer enough, but to the new people she had decided objections. It was notorious, however, that poor Lady Robeck secretly wrote for one of the papers, and the thing had certainly, in its glance at the doings of the great world, a side that might be made attractive. But we were going to make every side attractive, and we had everything to say about the sort of thing a paper like the *Beacon* would want. To give it what it would want and to give it nothing else was not doubtless an inspiring but was a perfectly respectable task, especially for a man with an appealing bride and a contentious mother-in-law. I thought Limbert's first letters as charming as the type allowed, though I won't deny that in spite of my sense of the importance of concessions I was just a trifle disconcerted at the way he had caught the tone. The tone was of course to be caught, but need it have been caught so in the act? The creature was even cleverer, as Maud Stannace said, than she had ventured to hope. Verily it was a good thing to have a dose of the wisdom of the serpent. If it had to be journalism—well, it *was* journalism. If he had to be "chatty"—well, he *was* chatty. Now and then he made a hit that—it was stupid of me—brought the blood to my face. I hated him to be so personal; but still, if it would make his fortune——! It wouldn't of course directly, but the book would, practically and in the sense to which our pure ideas of fortune were confined; and these things were all for the book. The daily balm meanwhile was in what one knew of the book—there were exquisite things to know; in the quiet monthly checks from Blackport and in the deeper rose of Maud's little preparations, which were as dainty, on their tiny scale, as if she had been a hummingbird building a nest. When at the end of three months her betrothed had fairly settled down to his correspondence—in which Mrs. Highmore was the only person, so far as we could discover, disappointed, even she moreover being in this particular tortuous and possibly jealous;

when the situation had assumed such a comfortable shape it was quite time to prepare. I published at that moment my first volume, mere faded ink today, a little collection of literary impressions, odds and ends of criticism contributed to a journal less remunerative but also less chatty than the *Beacon*, small ironies and ecstasies, great phrases and mistakes; and the very week it came out poor Limbert devoted half of one of his letters to it, with the happy sense this time of gratifying both himself and me as well as the Blackport breakfast tables. I remember his saying it wasn't literature, the stuff, superficial stuff, he had to write about me; but what did that matter if it came back, as we knew, to the making for literature in the roundabout way? I had sold the thing, I recall, for ten pounds, and with the money I bought in Vigo Street a quaint piece of old silver for Maud Stannace, which I carried her with my own hand as a wedding gift. In her mother's small drawing room, a faded bower of photography fenced in and bedimmed by folding screens out of which sallow persons of fashion with dashing signatures looked at you from retouched eyes and little windows of plush, I was left to wait long enough to feel in the air of the house a hushed vibration of disaster. When our young lady came in she was very pale and *her* eyes too had been retouched.

"Something horrid has happened," I at once said; and having really all along but half believed in her mother's meager permission, I risked with an unguarded groan the introduction of Mrs. Stannace's name.

"Yes, she has made a dreadful scene; she insists on our putting it off again. We're very unhappy: poor Ray has been turned off." Her tears recommenced to flow.

I had such a good conscience that I stared. "Turned off what?"

"Why, his paper of course. The *Beacon* has given him what he calls the sack. They don't like his letters—they're not the style of thing they want."

My blankness could only deepen. "Then what style of thing, in God's name, *do* they want?"

"Something more chatty."

"More?" I cried, aghast.

"More gossipy, more personal. They want 'journalism.' They want tremendous trash."

"Why, that's just what his letters have *been!*" I broke out.

This was strong, and I caught myself up, but the girl offered me the pardon of a beautiful wan smile. "So Ray himself declares. He says he has stooped so low."

"Very well—he must stoop lower. He *must* keep the place."

"He can't!" poor Maud wailed. "He says he has tried all he knows, has been abject, has gone on all fours, has crawled like a worm; and that if they don't like that——"

"He accepts his dismissal?" I interposed in dismay.

She gave a tragic shrug. "What other course is open to him? He wrote to them that such work as he has done is the very worst he can do for the money."

"Therefore," I pressed with a flash of hope, "they'll offer him more for worse?"

"No, indeed," she answered, "they haven't even offered him to go on at a reduction. He isn't funny enough."

I reflected a moment. "But surely such a thing as his notice of my book——!"

"It was your wretched book that was the last straw! He should have treated it superficially."

"Well, if he didn't——!" I began. Then I checked myself. "*Je vous porte malheur.*"

She didn't deny this; she only went on: "What on earth is he to do?"

"He's to do better than the monkeys! He's to write!"

"But what on earth are we to marry on?"

I considered once more. "You're to marry on *The Major Key.*"

II

The Major Key was the new novel, and the great thing accordingly was to finish it; a consummation for which three months of the *Beacon* had in some degree prepared the way.

The action of that journal was indeed a shock, but I didn't know then the worst, didn't know that in addition to being a shock it was also a symptom. It was the first hint of the difficulty to which poor Limbert was eventually to succumb. His state was the happier, of a truth, for his not immediately seeing all it meant. Difficulty was the law of life, but one could thank heaven it was quite abnormally present in that awful connection. There was the difficulty that inspired, the difficulty of *The Major Key* to wit, which it was after all base to sacrifice to the turning of somersaults for pennies. These convictions my friend beguiled his fresh wait by blandly entertaining: not indeed, I think, that the failure of his attempt to be chatty didn't leave him slightly humiliated. If it was bad enough to have grinned through a horse collar, it was very bad indeed to have grinned in vain. Well, he would try no more grinning or at least no more horse collars. The only success worth one's powder was success in the line of one's idiosyncrasy. Consistency was in itself distinction, and what was talent but the art of being completely whatever it was that one happened to be? One's things were characteristic or they were nothing. I look back rather fondly on our having exchanged in those days these admirable remarks and many others; on our having been very happy too, in spite of postponements and obscurities, in spite also of such occasional hauntings as could spring from our lurid glimpse of the fact that even twaddle cunningly calculated was far above people's heads. It was easy to wave away specters by the reflection that all one had to do was not to write for people; it was certainly not for people that Limbert wrote while he hammered at *The Major Key*. The taint of literature was fatal only in a certain kind of air, which was precisely the kind against which we had now closed our window. Mrs. Stannace rose from her crumpled cushions as soon as she had obtained an adjournment, and Maud looked pale and proud, quite victorious and superior, at her having obtained nothing more. Maud behaved well, I thought, to her mother, and well indeed, for a girl who had mainly been taught to be flowerlike, to everyone. What she gave Ray Limbert her fine abundant

needs made him then and ever pay for; but the gift was liberal, almost wonderful—an assertion I make even while remembering to how many clever women, early and late, his work has been dear. It was not only that the woman he was to marry was in love with him, but that—this was the strangeness—she had really seen almost better than anyone what he could do. The greatest strangeness was that she didn't want him to do something different. This boundless belief was indeed the main way of her devotion; and as an act of faith it naturally asked for miracles. She was a rare wife for a poet, if she was not perhaps the best to have been picked out for a poor man.

Well, we were to have the miracles at all events and we were in a perfect state of mind to receive them. There were more of us every day, and we thought highly even of our friend's odd jobs and potboilers. The *Beacon* had had no successor, but he found some quiet corners and stray chances. Perpetually poking the fire and looking out of the window, he was certainly not a monster of facility, but he was, thanks perhaps to a certain method in that madness, a monster of certainty. It wasn't everyone, however, who knew him for this: many editors printed him but once. He was getting a small reputation as a man it was well to have the first time; he created obscure apprehensions as to what might happen the second. He was good for making an impression, but no one seemed exactly to know what the impression was good for when made. The reason was simply that they had not seen yet *The Major Key*, that fiery-hearted rose as to which we watched in private the formation of petal after petal and flame after flame. Nothing mattered but this, for it had already elicited a splendid bid, much talked about in Mrs. Highmore's drawing room, where at this point my reminiscences grow particularly thick. Her roses bloomed all the year and her sociability increased with her row of prizes. We had an idea that we "met everyone" there—so we naturally thought when we met each other. Between our hostess and Ray Limbert flourished the happiest relation, the only cloud on which was that her husband eyed him rather askance. When he was called clever, this personage wanted to know what he

had to "show"; and it was certain that he showed nothing that could compare with Jane Highmore. Mr. Highmore took his stand on accomplished work and, turning up his coattails, warmed his rear with a good conscience at the neat bookcase in which the generations of triplets were chronologically arranged. The harmony between his companions rested on the fact that, as I have already hinted, each would have liked so much to be the other. Limbert couldn't but have a feeling about a woman who, in addition to being the best creature and her sister's backer, would have made, could she have condescended, such a success with the *Beacon*. On the other hand Mrs. Highmore used freely to say: "Do you know, he'll do exactly the thing that *I* want to do? I shall never do it myself, but he'll do it instead. Yes, he'll do *my* thing, and I shall hate him for it—the wretch." Hating him was her pleasant humor, for the wretch was personally to her taste.

She prevailed on her own publisher to promise to take *The Major Key* and to engage to pay a considerable sum down, as the phrase is, on the presumption of its attracting attention. This was good news for the evening's end at Mrs. Highmore's when there were only four or five left and cigarettes ran low; but there was better to come, and I have never forgotten how, as it was I who had the good fortune to bring it, I kept it back on one of those occasions, for the sake of my effect, till only the right people remained. The right people were now more and more numerous, but this was a revelation addressed only to a choice residuum—a residuum including of course Limbert himself, with whom I haggled for another cigarette before I announced that as a consequence of an interview I had had with him that afternoon, and of a subtle argument I had brought to bear, Mrs. Highmore's pearl of publishers had agreed to put forth the new book as a serial. He was to "run" it in his magazine and he was to pay ever so much more for the privilege. I produced a fine gasp which presently found a more articulate relief, but poor Limbert's voice failed him once for all—he knew he was to walk away with me—and it was someone else who asked me what my subtle argument had been. I forget

what florid description I then gave of it: today I've no reason not to confess that it had resided in the simple plea that the book was exquisite. I had said: "Come, my dear friend, be original; just risk it for that!" My dear friend seemed to rise to the chance, and I followed up my advantage, permitting him honestly no illusion as to the nature of the thing. He clutched interrogatively at two or three attenuations, but I dashed them aside, leaving him face to face with the formidable truth. It was just a pure gem: was he the man not to flinch? His danger appeared to have acted on him as the anaconda acts on the rabbit; fascinated and paralyzed, he had been engulfed in the long pink throat. When a week before, at my request, Limbert had left with me for a day the complete manuscript, beautifully copied out by Maud Stannace, I had flushed with indignation at its having to be said of the author of such pages that he hadn't the common means to marry. I had taken the field in a great glow to repair this scandal, and it was therefore quite directly my fault if three months later, when *The Major Key* began to run, Mrs. Stannace was driven to the wall. She had made a condition of a fixed income, and at last a fixed income was achieved.

She had to recognize it, and after much prostration among the photographs she recognized it to the extent of accepting some of the convenience of it in the form of a project for a common household, to the expenses of which each party should proportionately contribute. Jane Highmore made a great point of her not being left alone, but Mrs. Stannace herself determined the proportion, which on Limbert's side at least and in spite of many other fluctuations was never altered. His income had been "fixed" with a vengeance: having painfully stooped to the comprehension of it Mrs. Stannace rested on this effort to the end and asked no further question on the subject. *The Major Key* in other words ran ever so long, and before it was half out Limbert and Maud had been married and the common household set up. These first months were probably the happiest in the family annals, with wedding bells and budding laurels, the quiet assured course of the book and the friendly familiar note,

round the corner, of Mrs. Highmore's big guns. They gave Ralph time to block in another picture as well as to let me know after a while that he had the happy prospect of becoming a father. We had at times some dispute as to whether *The Major Key* was making an impression, but our difference could only be futile so long as we were not agreed as to what an impression consisted of. Several persons wrote to the author and several others asked to be introduced to him: wasn't that an impression? One of the lively "weeklies," snapping at the deadly "monthlies," said the whole thing was "grossly inartistic"—wasn't *that*? It was somewhere else proclaimed "a wonderfully subtle character study"—wasn't that too? The strongest effect doubtless was produced on the publisher when, in its lemon-colored volumes, like a little dish of three custards, the book was at last served cold: he never got his money back and so far as I know has never got it back to this day. *The Major Key* was rather a great performance than a great success. It converted readers into friends and friends into lovers; it placed the author, as the phrase is—placed him all too definitely; but it shrank to obscurity in the account of sales eventually rendered. It was in short an exquisite thing, but it was scarcely a thing to have published and certainly not a thing to have married on. I heard all about the matter, for my intervention had much exposed me. Mrs. Highmore was emphatic as to the second volume's having given her ideas, and the ideas are probably to be found in some of her works, to the circulation of which they have even perhaps contributed. This was not absolutely yet the very thing she wanted to do—though on the way to it. So much, she informed me, she particularly perceived in the light of a critical study that I put forth in a little magazine; a thing the publisher in his advertisements quoted from profusely, and as to which there sprang up some absurd story that **Limbert** himself had written it. I remember that on my asking **someone** why such an idiotic thing had been said my interlocutor replied: "Oh because, you know, it's just the way he *would* have written!" My spirit sank a little perhaps as I reflected that with such analogies in our manner there might prove to be some in our fate.

It was during the next four or five years that our eyes were open to what, unless something could be done, that fate, at least on Limbert's part, might be. The thing to be done was of course to write the book, the book that would make the difference, really justify the burden he had accepted and consummately express his power. For the works that followed upon *The Major Key* he had inevitably to accept conditions the reverse of brilliant, at a time too when the strain upon his resources had begun to show sharpness. With three babies in due course, an ailing wife and a complication still greater than these, it became highly important that a man should do only his best. Whatever Limbert did was his best; so at least each time I thought and so I unfailingly said somewhere, though it was not my saying it, heaven knows, that made the desired difference. Everyone else indeed said it, and there was among multiplied worries always the comfort that his position was quite assured. The two books that followed *The Major Key* did more than anything else to assure it, and Jane Highmore was always crying out: "You stand alone, dear Ray; you stand absolutely alone!" Dear Ray used to leave me in no doubt of how he felt the truth of this in feebly attempted discussions with his bookseller. His sister-in-law gave him good advice into the bargain; she was a repository of knowing hints, of esoteric learning. These things were doubtless not the less valuable to him for bearing wholly on the question of how a reputation might be with a little gumption, as Mrs. Highmore said, "worked." Save when she occasionally bore testimony to her desire to do, as Limbert did, something some day for her own very self, I never heard her speak of the literary motive as if it were distinguishable from the pecuniary. She cocked up his hat, she pricked up his prudence for him, reminding him that as one seemed to take oneself so the silly world was ready to take one. It was a fatal mistake to be too candid even with those who were all right—not to look and to talk prosperous, not at least to pretend one had beautiful sales. To listen to her you would have thought the profession of letters a wonderful game of bluff. Wherever one's idea began it ended

somehow in inspired paragraphs in the newspapers. "I pretend, I assure you, that you're going off like wildfire—I can at least do that for you!" she often declared, prevented as she was from doing much else by Mr. Highmore's insurmountable objection to *their* taking Mrs. Stannace.

I couldn't help regarding the presence of this latter lady in Limbert's life as the major complication: whatever he attempted it appeared given to him to achieve as best he could in the mere margin of the space in which she swung her petticoats. I may err in the belief that she practically lived on him, for though it was not in him to follow adequately Mrs. Highmore's counsel there were exasperated confessions he never made, scant domestic curtains he rattled on their rings. I may exaggerate in the retrospect his apparent anxieties, for these after all were the years when his talent was freshest and when as a writer he most laid down his line. It wasn't of Mrs. Stannace nor even as time went on of Mrs. Limbert that we mainly talked when I got at longer intervals a smokier hour in the little gray den from which we could step out, as we used to say, to the lawn. The lawn was the back garden, and Limbert's study was behind the dining room, with folding doors not impervious to the clatter of the children's tea. We sometimes took refuge from it in the depths—a bush and a half deep—of the shrubbery, where was a bench that gave us while we gossiped a view of Mrs. Stannace's tiaralike headdress nodding at an upper window. Within doors and without Limbert's life was overhung by an awful region that figured in his conversation, comprehensively and with unpremeditated art, as Upstairs. It was Upstairs that the thunder gathered, that Mrs. Stannace kept her accounts and her state, that Mrs. Limbert had her babies and her headaches, that the bells forever jangled at the maids, that everything imperative in short took place—everything **that** he had somehow, pen in hand, to meet, to deal with and **dispose** of, in the little room on the garden level. I don't think he liked to go Upstairs, but no special burst of confidence was needed to make me feel that a terrible deal of service went. It was the habit of the ladies of the Stannace family to be extremely waited on,

and I've never been in a house where three maids and a nursery governess gave such an impression of a retinue. "Oh, they're so deucedly, so hereditarily fine!"—I remember how that dropped from him in some worried hour. Well, it was because Maud was so universally fine that we had both been in love with her. It was not an air, moreover, for the plaintive note: no private inconvenience could long outweigh for him the great happiness of these years—the happiness that sat with us when we talked and that made it always amusing to talk, the sense of his being on the heels of success, coming closer and closer, touching it at last, knowing that he should touch it again and hold it fast and hold it high. Of course when we said success we didn't mean exactly what Mrs. Highmore for instance meant. He used to quote at me as a definition something from a nameless page of my own, some stray dictum to the effect that the man of his craft had achieved it when of a beautiful subject his expression was complete. Well, wasn't Limbert's in all conscience complete?

III

It was bang upon this completeness all the same that the turn arrived, the turn I can't say of his fortune—for what was that?—but of his confidence, of his spirits and, what was more to the point, of his system. The whole occasion on which the first symptom flared out is before me as I write. I had met them both at dinner: they were diners who had reached the penultimate stage—the stage which in theory is a rigid selection and in practice a wan submission. It was late in the season and stronger spirits than theirs were broken; the night was close and the air of the banquet such as to restrict conversation to the refusal of dishes and consumption to the sniffing of a flower. It struck me all the more that Mrs. Limbert was flying her flag. As vivid as a page of her husband's prose, she had one of those flickers of freshness that are the miracle of her sex and one of those expensive dresses that are the miracle of ours. She had also a neat brougham in which she had offered to rescue an old lady from the possibilities of a queer cabhorse; so that when

she had rolled away with her charge I proposed a walk home with her husband, whom I had overtaken on the doorstep. Before I had gone far with him he told me he had news for me—he had accepted, of all people and of all things, an “editorial position.” It had come to pass that very day, from one hour to another, without time for appeals or ponderations: Mr. Bousefield, the proprietor of a “high-class monthly,” making, as they said, a sudden change, had dropped on him heavily out of the blue. It was all right—there was a salary and an idea, and both of them, as such things went, rather high. We took our way slowly through the vacant streets, and in the explanations and revelations that as we lingered under lampposts I drew from him I found with an apprehension that I tried to gulp down a foretaste of the bitter end. He told me more than he had ever told me yet. He couldn’t balance accounts—that was the trouble: his expenses were too rising a tide. It was imperative he should at last make money, and now he must work only for that. The need this last year had gathered the force of a crusher: it had rolled over him and laid him on his back. He had his scheme; this time he knew what he was about; on some good occasion, with leisure to talk it over, he would tell me the blest whole. His editorship would help him, and for the rest he must help himself. If he couldn’t they would have to do something fundamental—change their life altogether, give up London, move into the country, take a house at thirty pounds a year, send their children to the Board school. I saw he was excited, and he admitted he was: he had waked out of a trance. He had been on the wrong tack; he had piled mistake on mistake. It was the vision of his remedy that now excited him: ineffably, grotesquely simple, it had yet come to him only within a day or two. No, he wouldn’t tell me what it was; he would give me the night to guess, and if I shouldn’t guess it would be because I was as big an ass as himself. However, a lone man might be an ass: he had room in his life for his ears. Ray had a burden that demanded a back: the back must therefore now be properly instituted. As to the editorship, it was simply heaven-sent, being not at all another case of the *Black-*

port *Beacon* but a case of the very opposite. The proprietor, the great Mr. Bousefield, had approached him precisely because his name, which was to be on the cover, *didn't* represent the chatty. The whole thing was to be—oh, on fiddling little lines of course—a protest against the chatty. Bousefield wanted him to be himself; it was for himself Bousefield had picked him out. Wasn't it beautiful and brave of Bousefield? He wanted literature, he saw the great reaction coming, the way the cat was going to jump. "Where will you get literature?" I woe-fully asked; to which he replied with a laugh that what he had to get was not literature but only what Bousefield would take for it.

In that single phrase I without more ado discovered his famous remedy. What was before him for the future was not to do his work but to do what somebody else would take for it. I had the question out with him on the next opportunity, and of all the lively discussions into which we had been destined to drift it lingers in my mind as the liveliest. This was not, I hasten to add, because I disputed his conclusions: it was an effect of the very force with which, when I had fathomed his wretched premises, I took them to my soul. It was very well to talk with Jane Highmore about his standing alone: the eminent relief of this position had brought him to the verge of ruin. Several persons admired his books—nothing was less contestable; but they appeared to have a mortal objection to acquiring them by subscription or by purchase: they begged or borrowed or stole, they delegated one of the party perhaps to commit the volumes to memory and repeat them, like the bards of old, to listening multitudes. Some ingenious theory was required at any rate to account for the inexorable limits of his circulation. It wasn't a thing for five people to live on; therefore either the objects circulated must change their nature or the organisms to be nourished must. The former change was perhaps the easier to consider first. Limbert considered it with sovereign ingenuity from that time on, and the ingenuity, greater even than any I had yet had occasion to admire in him, made the whole next stage of his career rich in curiosity and suspense.

"I've been butting my skull against a wall," he had said in those hours of confidence; "and, to be as sublime a blockhead, if you'll allow me the word, you, my dear fellow, have kept sounding the charge. We've sat prating here of 'success,' heaven help us, like chanting monks in a cloister, hugging the sweet delusion that it lies somewhere in the work itself, in the expression, as you said, of one's subject or the intensification, as somebody else somewhere says, of one's note. One has been going on in short as if the only thing to do were to accept the law of one's talent, and thinking that if certain consequences didn't follow it was only because one wasn't logical enough. My disaster has served me right—I mean for using that ignoble word at all. It's a mere distributor's, a mere hawker's word. What is 'success' anyhow? When a book's right it's right—shame to it surely if it isn't. When it sells it sells—it brings money like potatoes or beer. If there's dishonor one way and inconvenience the other, it certainly is comfortable, but it as certainly isn't glorious, to have escaped them. People of delicacy don't brag either about their probity or about their luck. Success be hanged!—I want to sell. It's a question of life and death. I must study the way. I've studied too much the other way—I know the other way now, every inch of it. I must cultivate the market—it's a science like another. I must go in for an infernal cunning. It will be very amusing, I foresee that; I shall lead a dashing life and drive a roaring trade. I haven't been obvious—I must *be* obvious. I haven't been popular—I must *be* popular. It's another art—or perhaps it isn't an art at all. It's something else; one must find out *what* it is. Is it something awfully queer?—you blush!—something barely decent? All the greater incentive to curiosity! Curiosity's an immense motive; we shall have tremendous sport. 'They all do it'—doesn't somebody sing at a **music** hall?—it's only a question of how. Of course I've **everything** to unlearn; but what's life, as Jane Highmore says, but a lesson? I must get all I can, all she can give me, from Jane. She can't explain herself much; she's all intuition; her processes are obscure; it's the spirit that swoops down and catches her up. But I must

study her reverently in her works. Yes, you've defied me before, but now my loins are girded: I declare I'll *read* one of them—I really will; I'll put it through if I perish!"

I won't pretend he made all these remarks at once; but there wasn't one that he didn't make at one time or another, for suggestion and occasion were plentiful enough, his life being now given up altogether to his new necessity. It wasn't a question of his having or not having, as they say, my intellectual sympathy: the brute force of the pressure left no room for judgment; it made all emotion a mere recourse to the spyglass. I watched him as I should have watched a long race or a long chase, irresistibly siding with him, yet much occupied with the calculation of odds. I confess indeed that my heart, for the endless stretch he covered so fast, was often in my throat. I saw him peg away over the sun-dappled plain, I saw him double and wind and gain and lose; and all the while I secretly entertained a conviction. I wanted him to feed his many mouths, but at the bottom of all things was my sense that if he should succeed in doing so in this particular way I should think less well of him. Now I had an absolute terror of that. Meanwhile so far as I could I backed him up, I helped him: all the more that I had warned him immensely at first, smiled with a compassion it was very good of him not to have found exasperating over the complacency of his assumption that a man could escape from himself. Ray Limbert at all events would certainly never escape; but one could make believe for him, make believe very hard—an undertaking in which at first Mr. Bousefield was visibly a blessing. Ralph was delightful on the business of this being at last my chance too—my chance, so miraculously vouchsafed, to appear with a certain luxuriance. He didn't care how often he printed me, for wasn't it exactly in my direction Mr. Bousefield held the cat was going to jump? This was the least he could do for me. I might write on anything I liked—on anything at least but Mr. Limbert's second manner. He didn't wish attention strikingly called to his second manner; it was to operate insidiously; people were to be left to believe they had discovered it long ago. "Ralph Limbert? Why, when did we

ever live without him?"—that's what he wanted them to say. Besides, they hated manners—let sleeping dogs lie. His understanding with Mr. Bousefield—on which he had had not at all to insist; it was the excellent man who insisted—was that he should run one of his beautiful stories in the magazine. As to the beauty of his story, however, Limbert was going to be less admirably straight than as to the beauty of everything else. That was another reason why I mustn't write about his new line: Mr. Bousefield was not to be too definitely warned that such a periodical was exposed to prostitution. By the time he should find it out for himself the public—*le gros public*—would have bitten, and then perhaps he would be conciliated and forgive. Everything else would be literary in short, and above all *I* would be; only Ralph Limbert wouldn't—he'd chuck up the whole thing sooner. He'd be vulgar, he'd be vile, he'd be abject: he'd be elaborately what he hadn't been before.

I duly noticed that he had more trouble in making "everything else" literary than he had at first allowed for; but this was largely counteracted by the ease with which he was able to obtain that his mark shouldn't be overshot. He had taken well to heart the old lesson of the *Beacon*; he remembered that he was after all there to keep his contributors down much rather than to keep them up. I thought at times that he kept them down a trifle too far, but he assured me that I needn't be nervous: he had his limit—his limit was inexorable. He would reserve pure vulgarity for his serial, over which he was sweating blood and water; elsewhere it should be qualified by the prime qualification, the mediocrity that attaches, that endears. Bousefield, he allowed, was proud, was difficult: nothing was really good enough for him but the middling good; he himself, however, was prepared for adverse comment, *resolute* for his noble course. Hadn't Limbert, moreover, in the event of a charge of laxity from headquarters the great strength of being able to point to my contributions? Therefore I must let myself go, I must abound in my peculiar sense, I must be a resource in case of accidents. Limbert's vision of accidents hovered mainly

over the sudden awakening of Mr. Bousefield to the stuff that in the department of fiction his editor was palming off. He would then have to confess in all humility that this was not what the old boy wanted, but I should be all the more there as a salutary specimen. I would cross the scent with something showily impossible, splendidly unpopular—I must be sure to have something on hand. I always had plenty on hand—poor Limbert needn't have worried: the magazine was forearmed each month by my care with a retort to any possible accusation of trifling with Mr. Bousefield's standard. He had admitted to Limbert, after much consideration indeed, that he was prepared to be perfectly human; but he had added that he was not prepared for an abuse of this admission. The thing in the world I think I least felt myself was an abuse, even though—as I had never mentioned to my friendly editor—I too had my project for a bigger reverberation. I daresay I trusted mine more than I trusted Limbert's; at all events the golden mean in which, for the special case, he saw his salvation as an editor was something I should be most sure of were I to exhibit it myself. I exhibited it month after month in the form of a monstrous levity, only praying heaven that my editor might now not tell me, as he had so often told me, that my result was awfully good. I knew what that would signify—it would signify, sketchily speaking, disaster. What he did tell me heartily was that it was just what his game required: his new line had brought with it an earnest assumption—earnest save when we privately laughed about it—of the locutions proper to real bold enterprise. If I tried to keep him in the dark even as he kept Mr. Bousefield, there was nothing to show that I wasn't tolerably successful: each case therefore presented a promising analogy for the other. He never noticed my descent, and it was accordingly possible Mr. Bousefield would never notice his. But would nobody notice it at all?—that was a question that added a prospective zest to one's possession of a critical sense. So much depended upon it that I was rather relieved than otherwise not to know the answer too soon. I waited in fact a year—the trial year for which Limbert had cannily engaged with Mr.

Bousefield; the year as to which, through the same sharpened shrewdness, it had been conveyed in the agreement between them that Mr. Bousefield wasn't to intermeddle. It had been Limbert's general prayer that we would during this period let him quite alone. His terror of my direct rays was a droll, dreadful force that always operated: he explained it by the fact that I understood him too well, expressed too much of his intention, saved him too little from himself. The less he was saved the more he didn't sell: I positively interpreted, and that was simply fatal.

I held my breath accordingly; I did more—I closed my eyes, I guarded my treacherous ears. He induced several of us to do that—of such devotions we were capable—so that, not even glancing at the thing from month to month and having nothing but his shamed anxious silence to go by, I participated only vaguely in the little hum that surrounded his act of sacrifice. It was blown about the town that the public would be surprised; it was hinted, it was printed, that he was making a desperate bid. His new work was spoken of as “more calculated for general acceptance.” These tidings produced in some quarters much reprobation, and nowhere more, I think, than on the part of certain persons who had never read a word of him, or assuredly had never spent a shilling on him, and who hung for hours over the other attractions of the newspaper that announced his abasement. So much asperity cheered me a little—seemed to signify that he might really be doing something. On the other hand, I had a distinct alarm; someone sent me for some alien reason an American journal—containing frankly more than that source of affliction—in which was quoted a passage from our friend's last installment. The passage—I couldn't for my life help reading it—was simply superb. Ah, he *would* have to move to the country if that ~~was~~ the worst he could do! It gave me a pang to see how little *after* all he had improved since the days of his competition with Pat Moyle. There was nothing in the passage quoted in the American paper that Pat would for a moment have owned.

During the last weeks, as the opportunity of reading the com-

plete thing drew near, one's suspense was barely endurable, and I shall never forget the July evening on which I put it to rout. Coming home to dinner I found the two volumes on my table, and I sat up with them half the night, dazed, bewildered, rubbing my eyes, wondering at the monstrous joke. *Was* it a monstrous joke, his second manner—was *this* the new line, the desperate bid, the scheme for more general acceptance and the remedy for material failure? Had he made a fool of all his following, or had he most injuriously made a still bigger fool of himself? Obvious?—where the deuce was it obvious? Popular?—how on earth could it be popular? The thing was charming with all his charm and powerful with all his power: it was an unscrupulous, an unsparing, a shameless, merciless masterpiece. It was, no doubt, like the old letters to the *Beacon*, the worst he could do; but the perversity of the effort, even though heroic, had been frustrated by the purity of the gift. Under what illusion had he labored, with what wavering treacherous compass had he steered? His honor was inviolable, his measurements were all wrong. I was thrilled with the whole impression and with all that came crowding in its train. It was too grand a collapse—it was too hideous a triumph; I exulted almost with tears—I lamented with a strange delight. Indeed as the short night waned and, threshing about in my emotion, I fidgeted to my high-perched window for a glimpse of the summer dawn, I became at last aware that I was staring at it out of eyes that had compassionately and admiringly filled. The eastern sky, over the London house tops, had a wonderful tragic crimson. That was the color of his magnificent mistake.

IV

If something less had depended on my impression, I daresay I should have communicated it as soon as I had swallowed my breakfast; but the case was so embarrassing that I spent the first half of the day in reconsidering it, dipping into the book again, almost feverishly turning its leaves and trying to extract from them, for my friend's benefit, some symptom of reassur-

ance, some ground for felicitation. This rash challenge had consequences merely dreadful; the wretched volumes, imperturbable and impeccable, with their shy secrets and their second line of defense, were like a beautiful woman more denuded or a great symphony on a new hearing. There was something quite sinister in the way they stood up to me. I couldn't, however, be dumb—that was to give the wrong tinge to my disappointment; so that later in the afternoon, taking my courage in both hands, I approached with a vain tortuosity poor Limbert's door. A smart victoria waited before it, in which, from the bottom of the street, I saw that a lady who had apparently just issued from the house was settling herself. I recognized Jane Highmore and instantly paused till she should drive down to me. She soon met me halfway and directly she saw me stopped her carriage in agitation. This was a relief—it postponed a moment the sight of that pale, fine face of our friend's fronting me for the right verdict. I gathered from the flushed eagerness with which Mrs. Highmore asked me if I had heard the news that a verdict of some sort had already been rendered.

"What news?—about the book?"

"About that horrid magazine. They're shockingly upset. He has lost his position—he has had a fearful flare-up with Mr. Bousefield."

I stood there blank, but not unaware in my blankness of how history repeats itself. There came to me across the years Maud's announcement of their ejection from the *Beacon*, and dimly, confusedly, the same explanation was in the air. This time, however, I had been on my guard; I had had my suspicion. "He has made it too flippant?" I found breath after an instant to inquire.

Mrs. Highmore's vacuity exceeded my own. "Too 'flippant'? He has made it too oracular; Mr. Bousefield says he has killed it." Then perceiving my stupefaction: "Don't you know what has happened?" she pursued; "isn't it because in his trouble, poor love, he has sent for you that you've come? You've heard nothing at all? Then you had better know before

you see them. Get in here with me—I'll take you a turn and tell you." We were close to the Park, the Regent's, and when with extreme alacrity I had placed myself beside her and the carriage had begun to enter it she went on: "It was what I feared, you know. It reeked with culture. He keyed it up too high."

I felt myself sinking in the general collapse. "What are you talking about?"

"Why, about that beastly magazine. They're all on the streets. I shall have to take mamma."

I pulled myself together. "What on earth, then, did Bousefield want? He said he wanted intellectual power."

"Yes, but Ray overdid it."

"Why, Bousefield said it was a thing he *couldn't* overdo."

"Well, Ray managed: he took Mr. Bousefield too literally. It appears the thing has been doing dreadfully, but the proprietor couldn't say anything, because he had covenanted to leave the editor quite free. He describes himself as having stood there in a fever and seen his ship go down. A day or two ago the year was up, so he could at last break out. Maud says he did break out quite fearfully—he came to the house and let poor Ray have it. Ray gave it him back—he reminded him of his own idea of the way the cat was going to jump."

I gasped with dismay. "Has Bousefield abandoned that idea? *Isn't* the cat going to jump?"

Mrs. Highmore hesitated. "It appears she doesn't seem in a hurry. Ray at any rate has jumped too far ahead of her. He should have temporized a little, Mr. Bousefield says; but I'm beginning to think, you know," said my companion, "that Ray *can't* temporize." Fresh from my emotion of the previous twenty-four hours I was scarcely in a position to disagree with her. "He published too much pure thought."

"Pure thought?" I cried. "Why, it struck me so often—certainly in a due proportion of cases—as pure drivell!"

"Oh, you're more keyed up than he! Mr. Bousefield says that of course he wanted things that were suggestive and clever, things that he could point to with pride. But he contends that

Ray didn't allow for human weakness. He gave everything in too stiff doses."

Sensibly, I fear, to my neighbor, I winced at her words—I felt a prick that made me meditate. Then I said: "Is that, by chance, the way he gave *me*?" Mrs. Highmore remained silent so long that I had somehow the sense of a fresh pang; and after a minute, turning in my seat, I laid my hand on her arm, fixed my eyes on her face, and pursued pressingly: "Do you suppose it to be to my 'Occasional Remarks' that Mr. Bousefield refers?"

At last she met my look. "Can you bear to hear it?"

"I think I can bear anything now."

"Well then, it was really what I wanted to give you an inkling of. It's largely over you that they've quarreled. Mr. Bousefield wants him to chuck you."

I grabbed her arm again. "And our friend *won't*?"

"He seems to cling to you. Mr. Bousefield says no magazine can afford you."

I gave a laugh that agitated the very coachman. "Why, my dear lady, has he any idea of my price?"

"It isn't your price—he says you're dear at any price: you do so much to sink the ship. Your 'Remarks' are called 'Occasional,' but nothing could be more deadly regular; you're there month after month and you're never anywhere else. And you supply no public want."

"I supply the most delicious irony."

"So Ray appears to have declared. Mr. Bousefield says that's not in the least a public want. No one can make out what you're talking about and no one would care if he could. I'm only quoting *him*, mind."

"Quote, quote—if Ray holds out. I think I must leave you now, please: I must rush back to express to him what I feel."

"I'll drive you to his door. That isn't all," said Mrs. Highmore. And on the way, when the carriage had turned, she communicated the rest. "Mr. Bousefield really arrived with an ultimatum: it had the form of something or other by Minnie Meadows."

"Minnie Meadows?" I was stupefied.

"The new lady humorist everyone seems talking about. It's the first of a series of screaming sketches for which poor Ray was to find a place."

"Is *that* Mr. Bousefield's idea of literature?"

"No, but he says it's the public's, and you've got to take *some* account of the public. *Aux grands maux les grands remèdes*. They had a tremendous lot of ground to make up, and no one would make it up like Minnie. She would be the best concession they could make to human weakness; she would strike at least this note of showing that it wasn't going to be quite all—well, all *you*. Now Ray draws the line at Minnie; he won't stoop to Minnie; he declines to touch, to look at Minnie. When Mr. Bousefield—rather imperiously, I believe—made Minnie a *sine qua non* of his retention of his post he said something rather violent, told him to go to some unmentionable place and take Minnie with him. That of course put the fat on the fire. They had really a considerable scene."

"So had he with the *Beacon* man," I musingly replied. "Poor dear, he seems born for considerable scenes! It's on Minnie, then, they've really split?" Mrs. Highmore exhaled her despair in a sound which I took for an assent, and when we had rolled a little further I rather inconsequently and to her visible surprise broke out of my reverie. "It will never do in the world—he *must* stoop to Minnie!"

"It's too late—and what I've told you still isn't all. Mr. Bousefield raises another objection."

"What other, pray?"

"Can't you guess?"

I wondered. "No more of Ray's fiction?"

"Not a line. That's something else no magazine can stand. Now that his novel has run its course Mr. Bousefield's distinctly disappointed."

I fairly bounded in my place. "Then it may do?"

Mrs. Highmore looked bewildered. "Why so, if he finds it too dull?"

"Dull? Ralph Limbert? He's as fine as the spray of a lawn irrigator."

"It comes to the same thing, when your lawn's as coarse as a turnip field. Mr. Bousefield had counted on something that *would* do, something that would have a wider acceptance. Ray says he wants gutterpipes and slop buckets." I collapsed again; my flicker of elation dropped to a throb of quieter comfort; and after a moment's silence I asked my neighbor if she had herself read the work our friend had just put forth. "No," she returned, "I gave him my word at the beginning, on his urgent request, that I wouldn't."

"Not even as a book?"

"He begged me never to look at it at all. He said he was trying a low experiment. Of course I knew what he meant and I entreated him to let me just for curiosity take a peep. But he was firm, he declared he couldn't bear the thought that a woman like me should see him in the depths."

"He's only, thank God, in the depths of distress," I answered. "His experiment's nothing worse than a failure."

"Then Bousefield *is* right—his circulation won't budge?"

"It won't move one, as they say in Fleet Street. The book has extraordinary beauty."

"Poor duck—after trying so hard!" Jane Highmore sighed with real tenderness. "What *will*, then, become of them?"

I was silent an instant. "You must take your mother."

She was silent too. "I must speak of it to Cecil!" she presently said. Cecil is Mr. Highmore, who then entertained, I knew, strong views on the inadjustability of circumstances in general to the idiosyncrasies of Mrs. Stannace. He held it supremely happy that in an important relation she should have met her match. Her match was Ray Limbert—not much of a writer but a practical man. "The dear things still think, you know," my companion continued, "that the book will be the beginning of their fortune. Their illusion, if you're right, will be rudely dispelled."

"That's what makes me dread to face them. I've just spent with his volumes an unforgettable night. His illusion has lasted because so many of us have been pledged till this moment to turn our faces the other way. We haven't known the truth and

have therefore had nothing to say. Now that we do know it indeed we have practically quite as little. I hang back from the threshold. How can I follow up with a burst of enthusiasm such a catastrophe as Mr. Bousefield's visit?"

As I turned uneasily about, my neighbor more comfortably snuggled. "Well, I'm glad, then, I haven't read him and have nothing unpleasant to say!" We had come back to Limbert's door, and I made the coachman stop short of it. "But he'll try again, with that determination of his: he'll build his hopes on the next time."

"On what else has he built them from the very first? It's never the present for him that bears the fruit; that's always postponed and for somebody else: there has always to be another try. I admit that his idea of a 'new line' has made him try harder than ever. It makes no difference," I brooded, still timorously lingering; "his achievement of his necessity, his hope of a market, will continue to attach itself to the future. But the next time will disappoint him as each last time has done—and then the next and the next and the next!"

I found myself seeing it all with a clearness almost inspired: it evidently cast a chill on Mrs. Highmore. "Then what on earth will become of him?" she plaintively repeated.

"I don't think I particularly care what may become of *him*," I returned with a conscious reckless increase of my exaltation; "I feel it almost enough to be concerned with what may become of one's enjoyment of him. I don't know in short what will become of his circulation; I'm only quite at my ease as to what will become of his work. It will simply keep all its quality. He'll try again for the common with what he'll believe to be a still more infernal cunning, and again the common will fatally elude him, for his infernal cunning will have been only his genius in an ineffectual disguise." We sat drawn up by the pavement, facing poor Limbert's future as I saw it. It relieved me in a manner to know the worst, and I prophesied with an assurance which as I look back upon it strikes me as rather remarkable. "*Que voulez-vous?*" I went on; "you can't make a sow's ear of a silk purse! It's grievous indeed if you like—

there are people who can't be vulgar for trying. *He* can't—it wouldn't come off, I promise you, even once. It takes more than trying—it comes by grace. It happens not to be given to Limbert to fall. He belongs to the heights—he breathes there, he lives there, and it's accordingly to the heights I must ascend," I said as I took leave of my conductress, "to carry him this wretched news from where *we* move!"

v

A few months were sufficient to show how right I had been about his circulation. It didn't move one, as I had said; it stopped short in the same place, fell off in a sheer descent, like some precipice gaped up at by tourists. The public, in other words, drew the line for him as sharply as he had drawn it for Minnie Meadows. Minnie has skipped with a flouncing caper over his line, however; whereas the mark traced by a lustier cudgel has been a barrier insurmountable to Limbert. Those next times I had spoken of to Jane Highmore, I see them simplified by retrocession. Again and again he made his desperate bid—again and again he tried to. His rupture with Mr. Bousefield caused him in professional circles, I fear, to be thought impracticable, and I'm perfectly aware, to speak candidly, that no sordid advantage ever accrued to him from such public patronage of my performances as he had occasionally been in a position to offer. I reflect for my comfort that any injury I may have done him by untimely application of a faculty of analysis which could point to no converts gained by honorable exercise was at least equaled by the injury he did himself. More than once, as I have hinted, I held my tongue at his request, but my frequent plea that such favors weren't politic never found him, when in other connections there was an opportunity to give me a lift, anything but indifferent to the danger of the association. He let them have me, in a word, whenever he could; sometimes in periodicals in which he had credit, sometimes only at dinner. He talked about me when he couldn't get me in, but it was always part of the bargain that I shouldn't

make him a topic. "How can I successfully serve you if you do?" he used to ask: he was more afraid than I thought he ought to have been of the charge of tit for tat. I didn't care, for I never could distinguish tat from tit; but, as I've intimated, I dropped into silence really more than anything else because there was a certain fascinated observation of his course which was quite testimony enough and to which in this huddled conclusion of it he practically reduced me.

I see it all foreshortened, his wonderful remainder—see it from the end backward, with the direction widening toward me as if on a level with the eye. The migration to the country promised him at first great things—smaller expenses, larger leisure, conditions eminently conducive on each occasion to the possible triumph of the next time. Mrs. Stannace, who altogether disapproved of it, gave as one of her reasons that her son-in-law, living mainly in a village on the edge of a goose-green, would be deprived of that contact with the great world which was indispensable to the painter of manners. She had the showiest arguments for keeping him in touch, as she called it, with good society; wishing to know with some force where, from the moment he ceased to represent it from observation, the novelist could be said to be. In London fortunately a clever man was just a clever man; there were charming houses in which a person of Ray's undoubted ability, even though without the knack of making the best use of it, could always be sure of a quiet corner for watching decorously the social kaleidoscope. But the kaleidoscope of the goose-green, what in the world was that, and what such delusive thrift as drives about the land (with a fearful account for flies from the inn) to leave cards on the country magnates? This solicitude for Limbert's subject matter was the specious color with which, deeply determined not to affront mere tolerance in a cottage, Mrs. Stannace overlaid her indisposition to place herself under the heel of Cecil Highmore. She knew that he ruled Upstairs as well as down, and she clung to the fable of the association of interests in the north of London. The Highmores had a better address, they lived now in Stanhope Gardens; but Cecil was

fearfully artful—he wouldn't hear of an association of interests nor treat with his mother-in-law save as a visitor. She didn't like false positions; but on the other hand she didn't like the sacrifice of everything she was accustomed to. Her universe at all events was a universe of card-leavings and charming houses, and it was fortunate that she couldn't, Upstairs, catch the sound of the doom to which, in his little gray den, describing to me his diplomacy, Limbert consigned alike the country magnates and the opportunities of London. Despoiled of every guarantee she went to Stanhope Gardens like a mere maid-servant, with restrictions on her very luggage, while during the year that followed this upheaval Limbert, strolling with me on the goose-green, to which I often ran down, played extravagantly over the theme that with what he was now going in for it was a positive comfort not to have the social kaleidoscope. With a cold-blooded trick in view, what had life or manners or the best society or flies from the inn to say to the question? It was as good a place as another to play his new game. He had found a quieter corner than any corner of the great world, and a damp old house at tenpence a year, which, beside leaving him all his margin to educate his children, would allow of the supreme luxury of his frankly presenting himself as a poor man. This was a convenience that *ces dames*, as he called them, had never yet fully permitted him.

It rankled in me at first to see his reward so meager, his conquest so mean; but the simplification effected had a charm that I finally felt: it was a forcing-house for the three or four other fine miscarriages to which his scheme was evidently condemned. I limited him to three or four, having had my sharp impression, in spite of the perpetual broad joke of the thing, that a spring had really broken in him on the occasion of that deeply disconcerting sequel to the episode of his editorship. He never lost his sense of the grotesque want, in the difference made, of adequate relation to the effort that had been the intensest of his life. He had carried from that moment a charge of shot, and it slowly worked its way to a vital part. As he met his embarrassments each year with his punctual false remedy, I won-

dered periodically where he found the energy to return to the attack. He did it every time with a rage more blanched, but it was clear to me that the tension must finally snap the cord. We got again and again the irrepressible work of art, but what did *he* get, poor man, who wanted something so different? There were likewise odder questions than this in the matter, phenomena more curious and mysteries more puzzling, which often for sympathy, if not for illumination, I intimately discussed with Mrs. Limbert. She had her burdens, dear lady: after the removal from London and a considerable interval she twice again became a mother. Mrs. Stannace too, in a more restricted sense, exhibited afresh, in relation to the home she had abandoned, the same exemplary character. In her poverty of guarantees at Stanhope Gardens there had been least of all, it appeared, a proviso that she shouldn't resentfully revert again from Goneril to Regan. She came down to the goose-green like Lear himself, with fewer knights, or at least baronets, and the joint household was at last patched up. It fell to pieces and was put together on various occasions before Ray Limbert died. He was ridden to the end by the superstition that he had broken up Mrs. Stannace's original home on pretenses that had proved hollow, and that if he hadn't given Maud what she might have had he could at least give her back her mother. I was always sure that a sense of the compensations he owed was half the motive of the dogged pride with which he tried to wake up the libraries. I believed Mrs. Stannace still had money, though she pretended that, called upon at every turn to retrieve deficits, she had long since poured it into the general fund. This conviction haunted me; I suspected her of secret hoards, and I said to myself that she couldn't be so infamous as not some day on her deathbed to leave everything to her less opulent daughter. My compassion for the Limberts led me to hover perhaps indiscreetly round that closing scene, to dream of some happy time when such an accession of means would make up a little for their present penury.

This, however, was crude comfort, as in the first place I had nothing definite to go by and in the second I held it for

more and more indicated that Ray wouldn't outlive her. I never ventured to sound him as to what in this particular he hoped or feared, for after the crisis marked by his leaving London I had new scruples about suffering him to be reminded of where he fell short. The poor man was in truth humiliated, and there were things as to which that kept us both silent. In proportion as he tried more fiercely for the market the old plaintive arithmetic, fertile in jokes, dropped from our conversation. We joked immensely still about the process, but our treatment of the results became sparing and superficial. He talked as much as ever, with monstrous arts and borrowed hints, of the traps he kept setting, but we all agreed to take merely for granted that the animal was caught. This propriety had really dawned upon me the day that, after Mr. Bousefield's visit, Mrs. Highmore put me down at his door. Mr. Bousefield at that juncture had been served up to me anew, but after we had disposed of him we came to the book, which I was obliged to confess I had already rushed through. It was from this moment—the moment at which my terrible impression of it had blinked out at his anxious query—that the image of his scared face was to abide with me. I couldn't attenuate then—the cat was out of the bag; but later, each of the next times, I did, I acknowledge, attenuate. We all did religiously, so far as was possible; we cast ingenious ambiguities over the strong places, the beauties that betrayed him most, and found ourselves in the queer position of admirers banded to mislead a confiding artist. If we stifled our cheers, however, if we dissimulated our joy, our fond hypocrisy accomplished little, for Limbert's finger was on a pulse that told a plainer story. It was a satisfaction to have secured a greater freedom with his wife, who at last, much to her honor, entered into the conspiracy and whose sense of responsibility was flattered by the frequency of our united appeal to her for some answer to the marvelous riddle. We had all turned it over till we were tired of it, threshing out the question of why the note he strained every chord to pitch for common ears should invariably insist on addressing itself to the angels. Being, as it were, ourselves the angels, we had only a

limited quarrel in each case with the event; but its inconsequent character, given the forces set in motion, was peculiarly baffling. It was like an interminable sum that wouldn't come straight; nobody had the time to handle so many figures. Limbert gathered, to make his pudding, dry bones and dead husks; how, then, was one to formulate the law that made the dish prove a feast? What was the cerebral treachery that defied his own vigilance? There was some obscure interference of taste, some obsession of the exquisite. All one could say was that genius was a fatal disturber or that the unhappy man had no effectual *flair*. When he went abroad to gather garlic he came home with heliotrope.

I hasten to add that if Mrs. Limbert was not directly illuminating she was yet rich in anecdote and example, having found a refuge from mystification exactly where the rest of us had found it, in a more devoted embrace and the sense of a finer glory. Her disappointments and eventually her privations had been many, her discipline severe; but she had ended by accepting the long grind of life and was now quite willing to take her turn at the mill. She was essentially one of us—she always understood. Touching and admirable at the last, when through the unmistakable change in Limbert's health her troubles were thickest, was the spectacle of the particular pride that she wouldn't have exchanged for prosperity. She had said to me once—only once, in a gloomy hour of London days when things were not going at all—that one really had to think him a very great man, since if one didn't one would be rather ashamed of him. She had distinctly felt it at first—and in a very tender place—that almost everyone passed him on the road; but I believe that in these final years she would almost have been ashamed of him if he had suddenly gone into editions. It's certain indeed that her complacency was not subjected to that shock. She would have liked the money immensely, but she would have missed something she had taught herself to regard as rather rare. There's another remark I remember her making, a remark to the effect that of course if she could have chosen she would have liked him to be Shakespeare or Scott,

but that failing this she was very glad he wasn't—well, she named the two gentlemen, but I won't. I daresay she sometimes laughed out to escape an alternative. She contributed passionately to the capture of the second manner, foraging for him further afield than he could conveniently go, gleaning in the barest stubble, picking up shreds to build the nest and in particular, in the study of the great secret of how, as we always said, they all did it, laying waste of the circulating libraries. If Limbert had a weakness he rather broke down in his reading. It was fortunately not till after the appearance of *The Hidden Heart* that he broke down in everything else. He had had rheumatic fever in the spring, when the book was but half finished, and this ordeal had in addition to interrupting his work enfeebled his powers of resistance and greatly reduced his vitality. He recovered from the fever and was able to take up the book again, but the organ of life was pronounced ominously weak and it was enjoined upon him with some sharpness that he should lend himself to no worries. It might have struck me as on the cards that his worries would now be surmountable, for when he began to mend he expressed to me a conviction almost contagious that he had never yet made so adroit a bid as in the idea of *The Hidden Heart*. It is grimly droll to reflect that this superb little composition, the shortest of his novels but perhaps the loveliest, was planned from the first as an "adventure story" on approved lines. It was the way they all did the adventure story that he had tried dauntlessly to emulate. I wonder how many readers ever divined to which of their book shelves *The Hidden Heart* was so exclusively addressed. High medical advice early in the summer had been quite viciously clear as to the inconvenience that might ensue to him should he neglect to spend the winter in Egypt. He was not a man to neglect anything; but Egypt seemed to us all then as unattainable as a second edition. He finished *The Hidden Heart* with the energy of apprehension and desire, for if the book should happen to do what "books of that class," as the publisher said, sometimes did, he might well have a fund to draw on. As soon as I read the fine, deep thing I knew, as I had known in each

case before, exactly how well it would do. Poor Limbert in this long business always figured to me an undiscourageable parent to whom only girls kept being born. A bouncing boy, a son and heir, was devoutly prayed for and almanacks and old wives consulted; but the spell was inveterate, incurable, and *The Hidden Heart* proved, so to speak, but another female child. When the winter arrived accordingly Egypt was out of the question. Jane Highmore, to my knowledge, wanted to lend him money, and there were even greater devotees who did their best to induce him to lean on them. There was so marked a "movement" among his friends that a very considerable sum would have been at his disposal; but his stiffness was invincible: it had its root, I think, in his sense, on his own side, of sacrifices already made. He had sacrificed honor and pride, and he had sacrificed them precisely to the question of money. He would evidently, should he be able to go on, have to continue to sacrifice them, but it must be all in the way to which he had now, as he considered, hardened himself. He had spent years in plotting for favor, and since on favor he must live it could only be as a bargain and a price.

He got through the early part of the season better than we feared, and I went down in great elation to spend Christmas on the goose-green. He told me late on Christmas Eve, after our simple domestic revels had sunk to rest and we sat together by the fire, how he had been visited the night before in wakeful hours by the finest fancy for a really good thing that he had ever felt descend in the darkness. "It's just the vision of a situation that contains, upon my honor, everything," he said, "and I wonder I've never thought of it before." He didn't describe it further, contrary to his common practice, and I only knew later, by Mrs. Limbert, that he had begun *Derogation* and was completely full of his subject. It was, however, a subject he wasn't to live to treat. The work went on for a couple of months in quiet mystery, without revelations even to his wife. He hadn't invited her to help him to get up his case—she hadn't taken the field with him as on his previous campaigns. We only knew he was at it again, but that less even than ever

had been said about the impression to be made on the market. I saw him in February and thought him sufficiently at ease. The great thing was that he was immensely interested and was pleased with the omens. I got a strange, stirring sense that he had not consulted the usual ones and indeed that he had floated away into a grand indifference, into a reckless consciousness of art. The voice of the market had suddenly grown faint and far: he had come back at the last, as people so often do, to one of the moods, the sincerities of his prime. Was he really, with a blurred sense of the urgent, doing something now only for himself? We wondered and waited—we felt he was a little confused. What had happened, I was afterwards satisfied, was that he had quite forgotten whether he generally sold or not. He had merely waked up one morning again in the country of the blue and had stayed there with a good conscience and a great idea. He stayed till death knocked at the gate, for the pen dropped from his hand only at the moment when, from sudden failure of the heart, his eyes, as he sank back in his chair, closed forever. *Derogation* is a splendid fragment; it evidently would have been one of his high successes. I am not prepared to say it would have waked up the libraries.

MAUD-EVELYN*

On some allusion to a lady who, though unknown to myself, was known to two or three of the company, it was asked by one of these if we had heard the odd circumstance of what she had just "come in for"—the piece of luck suddenly overtaking, in the gray afternoon of her career, so obscure and lonely a personage. We were at first, in our ignorance, mainly reduced to crude envy; but old Lady Emma, who for a while had said nothing, scarcely even appearing to listen and letting the chatter, which was indeed plainly beside the mark, subside of itself, came back from a mental absence to observe that if what had happened to Lavinia was wonderful, certainly, what had for years gone before it, led up to it, had likewise not been without some singular features. From this we perceived that Lady Emma had a story—a story moreover out of the ken even of those of her listeners acquainted with the quiet person who was the subject of it. Almost the oddest thing—as came out afterwards—was that such a situation should, for the world, have remained so in the background of this person's life. By "afterwards" I mean simply before we separated; for what came out came on the spot, under encouragement and pressure, our common, eager solicitation. Lady Emma, who always reminded me of a fine old instrument that has first to be tuned, agreed, after a few of our scrapings and fingerings, that, having said so much, she couldn't, without wantonly tormenting us, forbear to say all. She had known Lavinia, whom she mentioned throughout only by that name, from far away, and she had also known—— But what she had known I must give as nearly as possible as she herself gave it. She talked to us from her corner of the sofa, and the flicker of the firelight in her face was like the glow of memory, the play of fancy, from within.

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I

"Then why on earth don't you take him?" I asked. I think that was the way that, one day when she was about twenty—before some of you perhaps were born—the affair, for me, must have begun. I put the question because I knew she had had a chance, though I didn't know how great a mistake her failure to embrace it was to prove. I took an interest because I liked them both—you see how I like young people still—and because, as they had originally met at my house, I had in a manner to answer to each for the other. I'm afraid I'm thrown baldly back on the fact that if the girl was the daughter of my earliest, almost my only governess, to whom I had remained much attached and who, after leaving me, had married—for a governess—"well," Marmaduke (it isn't *his* real name!) was the son of one of the clever men who had—I was charming then, I assure you I was—wanted, years before, and this one as a widower, to marry me. I hadn't cared, somehow, for widowers, but even after I had taken somebody else I was conscious of a pleasant link with the boy whose stepmother it had been open to me to become and to whom it was perhaps a little a matter of vanity with me to show that I should have been for him one of the kindest. This was what the woman his father eventually did marry was not, and that threw him upon me the more.

Lavinia was one of nine, and her brothers and sisters, who have never done anything for her, help, actually, in different countries and on something, I believe, of that same scale, to people the globe. There were mixed in her then, in a puzzling way, two qualities that mostly exclude each other—an extreme timidity and, as the smallest fault that could qualify a harmless creature for a world of wickedness, a self-complacency hard in tiny, unexpected spots, for which I used sometimes to take her up, but which, I subsequently saw, would have done something for the flatness of her life had they not evaporated with everything else. She was at any rate one of those persons as to whom you don't know whether they might have been at-

tractive if they had been happy, or might have been happy if they had been attractive. If I was a trifle vexed at her not jumping at Marmaduke, it was probably rather less because I expected wonders of him than because I thought she took her own prospect too much for granted. She had made a mistake and, before long, admitted it; yet I remember that when she expressed to me a conviction that he would ask her again, I also thought this highly probable, for in the meantime I had spoken to him. "She does care for you," I declared; and I can see at this moment, long ago though it be, his handsome, empty young face look, on the words, as if, in spite of itself for a little, it really thought. I didn't press the matter, for he had, after all, no great things to offer; yet my conscience was easier, later on, for having not said less. He had three hundred and fifty a year from his mother, and one of his uncles had promised him something—I don't mean an allowance, but a place, if I recollect, in a business. He assured me that he loved as a man loves—a man of twenty-two!—but once. He said it, at all events, as a man says it but once.

"Well, then," I replied, "your course is clear."

"To speak to her again, you mean?"

"Yes—try it."

He seemed to try it a moment in imagination; after which, a little to my surprise, he asked: "Would it be very awful if she should speak to *me*?"

I stared. "Do you mean pursue you—overtake you? Ah, if you're running away——"

"I'm not running away!"—he was positive as to that. "But when a fellow has gone so far——"

"He can't go any further? Perhaps," I replied dryly. "But in that case he shouldn't talk of 'caring.'"

"Oh, but I do, I do."

I shook my head. "Not if you're too proud!" On which I turned away, looking round at him again, however, after he had surprised me by a silence that seemed to accept my judgment. Then I saw he had not accepted it; I perceived it indeed to be essentially absurd. He expressed more, on this, than I

had yet seen him do—had the queerest, frankest, and, for a young man of his conditions, saddest smile.

"I'm *not* proud. It isn't *in* me. If you're not, you're not, you know. I don't think I'm proud enough."

It came over me that this was, after all, probable; yet somehow I didn't at the moment like him the less for it, though I spoke with some sharpness. "Then what's the matter with you?"

He took a turn or two about the room, as if what he had just said had made him a little happier. "Well, how can a man say more?" Then, just as I was on the point of assuring him that I didn't know what he had said, he went on: "I swore to her that I would never marry. Oughtn't that to be enough?"

"To make her come after you?"

"No—I suppose scarcely that; but to make her feel sure of me—to make her wait."

"Wait for what?"

"Well, till I come back."

"Back from where?"

"From Switzerland—haven't I told you? I go there next month with my aunt and my cousin."

He was quite right about not being proud—this was an alternative distinctly humble.

II

And yet see what it brought forth—the beginning of which was something that, early in the autumn, I learned from poor Lavinia. He had written to her, they were still such friends; and thus it was that she knew his aunt and his cousin to have come back without him. He had stayed on—stayed much longer and traveled much further: he had been to the Italian lakes and to Venice; he was now in Paris. At this I vaguely wondered, knowing that he was always short of funds and that he must, by his uncle's beneficence, have started on the journey on a basis of expenses paid. "Then whom has he picked up?" I asked; but feeling sorry, as soon as I had spoken, to have made

Lavinia blush. It was almost as if he had picked up some improper lady, though in this case he wouldn't have told her, and it wouldn't have saved him money.

"Oh, he makes acquaintance so quickly, knows people in two minutes," the girl said. "And everyone always wants to be nice to him."

This was perfectly true, and I saw what she saw in it. "Ah, my dear, he will have an immense circle ready for you!"

"Well," she replied, "if they do run after us I'm not likely to suppose it will ever be for me. It will be for *him*, and they may do to me what they like. My pleasure will be—but you'll see." I already saw—saw at least what she supposed she herself saw: her drawing room crowded with female fashion and her attitude angelic. "Do you know what he said to me again before he went?" she continued.

I wondered; he *had* then spoken to her. "That he will never, never marry——"

"Anyone but *me!*" She ingenuously took me up. "Then you knew?"

It might be. "I guessed."

"And don't you believe it?"

Again I hesitated. "Yes." Yet all this didn't tell me why she had changed color. "Is it a secret—whom he's with?"

"Oh, no, they seem so nice. I was only struck with the way you know him—your seeing immediately that it must be a new friendship that has kept him over. It's the devotion of the Dedricks," Lavinia said. "He's traveling with them."

Once more I wondered. "Do you mean they're taking him about?"

"Yes—they've invited him."

No, indeed, I reflected—he wasn't proud. But what I said was: "Who in the world are the Dedricks?"

"Kind, good people whom, last month, he accidentally met. He was walking some Swiss pass—a long, rather stupid one, I believe, without his aunt and his cousin, who had gone round some other way and were to meet him somewhere. It came on to rain in torrents, and while he was huddling under a shelter he

was overtaken by some people in a carriage, who kindly made him get in. They drove him, I gather, for several hours; it began an intimacy, and they've continued to be charming to him."

I thought a moment. "Are they ladies?"

Her own imagination meanwhile had also strayed a little. "I think about forty."

"Forty ladies?"

She quickly came back. "Oh, no; I mean Mrs. Dedrick is."

"About forty? Then Miss Dedrick——"

"There isn't any Miss Dedrick."

"No daughter?"

"Not with them, at any rate. No one but the husband."

I thought again. "And how old is *he*?"

Lavinia followed my example. "Well, about forty, too."

"About forty-two?" We laughed, but "That's all right!" I said; and so, for the time, it seemed.

He continued absent, none the less, and I saw Lavinia repeatedly, and we always talked of him, though this represented a greater concern with his affairs than I had really supposed myself committed to. I had never sought the acquaintance of his father's people, nor seen either his aunt or his cousin, so that the account given by these relatives of the circumstances of their separation reached me at last only through the girl, to whom, also—for she knew them as little—it had circuitously come. They considered, it appeared, the poor ladies he had started with, that he had treated them ill and thrown them over, sacrificing them selfishly to company picked up on the road—a reproach deeply resented by Lavinia, though about the company too I could see she was not much more at her ease. "How can he help it if he's so taking?" she asked; and to be properly indignant in one quarter she had to pretend to be delighted in the other. Marmaduke *was* "taking"; yet it also came out between us at last that the Dedricks must certainly be extraordinary. We had scant added evidence, for his letters stopped, and that naturally was one of our signs. I had meanwhile leisure to reflect—it was a sort of study of the human scene I always liked—

on what to be taking consisted of. The upshot of my meditations, which experience has only confirmed, was that it consisted simply of itself. It was a quality implying no others. Marmaduke *had* no others. What indeed was his need of any?

III

He at last, however, turned up; but then it happened that if, on his coming to see me, his immediate picture of his charming new friends quickened even more than I had expected my sense of the variety of the human species, my curiosity about them failed to make me respond when he suggested I should go to see them. It's a difficult thing to explain, and I don't pretend to put it successfully, but doesn't it often happen that one may think well enough of a person without being inflamed with the desire to meet—on the ground of any such sentiment—other persons who think still better? Somehow—little harm as there was in Marmaduke—it was but half a recommendation of the Dedricks that they were crazy about him. I didn't say this—I was careful to say little; which didn't prevent his presently asking if he mightn't then bring them to *me*. "If not, why not?" he laughed. He laughed about everything.

"Why not? Because it strikes me that your surrender doesn't require any backing. Since you've done it you must take care of yourself."

"Oh, but they're as safe," he returned, "as the Bank of England. They're wonderful—for respectability and goodness."

"Those are precisely qualities to which my poor intercourse can contribute nothing." He hadn't, I observed, gone so far as to tell me they would be "fun," and he *had*, on the other hand, promptly mentioned that they lived in Westbourne Terrace. They were not forty—they were forty-five; but Mr. Dedrick had already, on considerable gains, retired from some primitive profession. They were the simplest, kindest, yet most original and unusual people, and nothing could exceed, frankly, the fancy they had taken to him. Marmaduke spoke of it with a placidity of resignation that was almost irritating. I suppose I

should have despised him if, after benefits accepted, he had said they bored him; yet their not boring him vexed me even more than it puzzled. "Whom do they know?"

"No one but me. There are people in London like that."

"Who know no one but you?"

"No—I mean no one at all. There are extraordinary people in London, and awfully nice. You haven't an idea. You people don't know everyone. They lead their lives—they go their way. One finds—what do you call it?—refinement, books, cleverness, don't you know, and music, and pictures, and religion, and an excellent table—all sorts of pleasant things. You only come across them by chance; but it's all perpetually going on."

I assented to this: the world was very wonderful, and one must certainly see what one could. In my own quarter too I found wonders enough. "But are you," I asked, "as fond of them—"

"As they are of *me*?" He took me up promptly, and his eyes were quite unclouded. "I'm quite sure I shall become so."

"Then are you taking Lavinia——?"

"Not to see them—no." I saw, myself, the next minute, of course, that I had made a mistake. "On what footing *can* I?"

I bethought myself. "I keep forgetting you're not engaged."

"Well," he said after a moment, "I shall never marry another."

It somehow, repeated again, gave on my nerves. "Ah, but what good will that do her, or me either, if you don't marry *her*?"

He made no answer to this—only turned away to look at something in the room; after which, when he next faced me, he had a heightened color. "She ought to have taken me that day," he said gravely and gently; fixing me also as if he wished to say more.

I remember that his very mildness irritated me; some show of resentment would have been a promise that the case might still be righted. But I dropped it, the silly case, without letting him say more, and, coming back to Mr. and Mrs. Dedrick, asked him how in the world, without either occupation or society,

they passed so much of their time. My question appeared for a moment to leave him at a loss, but he presently found light; which, at the same time, I saw on my side, really suited him better than further talk about Lavinia. "Oh, they live for Maud-Evelyn."

"And who's Maud-Evelyn?"

"Why, their daughter."

"Their daughter?" I had supposed them childless.

He partly explained. "Unfortunately they've lost her."

"Lost her?" I required more.

He hesitated again. "I mean that a great many people would take it that way. But *they* don't—they won't."

I speculated. "Do you mean other people would have given her up?"

"Yes—perhaps even tried to forget her. But the Dedricks can't."

I wondered what she had done: had it been anything very bad? However, it was none of my business, and I only said: "They communicate with her?"

"Oh, all the while."

"Then why isn't she with them?"

Marmaduke thought. "She *is*—now."

"'Now?' Since when?"

"Well, this last year."

"Then why do you say they've lost her?"

"Ah," he said, smiling sadly, "I should call it that. I, at any rate," he went on, "don't see her."

Still more I wondered. "They keep her apart?"

He thought again. "No, it's not that. As I say, they live for her."

"But they don't want *you* to—is that it?"

At this he looked at me for the first time, as I thought, a little strangely. "How *can* I?"

He put it to me as if it were bad of him, somehow, that he shouldn't; but I made, to the best of my ability, a quick end of that. "You can't. Why in the world *should* you? Live for *my* girl. Live for Lavinia."

IV

I had unfortunately run the risk of boring him again with that idea, and, though he had not repudiated it at the time, I felt in my having returned to it the reason why he never reappeared for weeks. I saw "my girl," as I had called her, in the interval, but we avoided with much intensity the subject of Marmaduke. It was just this that gave me my perspective for finding her constantly full of him. It determined me, in all the circumstances, not to rectify her mistake about the childlessness of the Dedricks. But whatever I left unsaid, her naming the young man was only a question of time, for at the end of a month she told me he had been twice to her mother's and that she had seen him on each of these occasions.

"Well then?"

"Well then, he's very happy."

"And still taken up——"

"As much as ever, yes, with those people. He didn't tell me so, but I could see it."

I could, too, and her own view of it. "What, in that case, did he tell you?"

"Nothing—but I think there's something he wants to. Only not what *you* think," she added.

I wondered then if it were what I had had from him the last time. "Well, what prevents him?" I asked.

"From bringing it out? I don't know."

It was in the tone of this that she struck, to my ear, the first note of an acceptance so deep and a patience so strange that they gave me, at the end, even more food for wonderment than the rest of the business. "If he can't speak, why does he come?"

She almost smiled. "Well, I think I *shall* know."

I looked at her; I remember that I kissed her. "You're admirable; but it's very ugly."

"Ah," she replied, "he only wants to be kind!"

"To *them*? Then he should let others alone. But what I call ugly is his being content to be so 'beholden'——"

"To Mr. and Mrs. Dedrick?" She considered as if there might be many sides to it. "But mayn't he do them some good?"

The idea failed to appeal to me. "What good can Marmaduke do? There's one thing," I went on, "in case he should want you to know them. Will you promise me to refuse?"

She only looked helpless and blank. "Making their acquaintance?"

"Seeing them, going near them—ever, ever."

Again she brooded. "Do you mean *you* won't?"

"Never, never."

"Well, then, I don't think I want to."

"Ah, but that's not a promise." I kept her up to it. "I want your word."

She demurred a little. "But why?"

"So that at least he shan't make use of you," I said with energy.

My energy overbore her, though I saw how she would really have given herself. "I promise, but it's only because it's something I know he will never ask."

I differed from her at the time, believing the proposal in question to have been exactly the subject she had supposed him to be wishing to broach; but on our very next meeting I heard from her of quite another matter, upon which, as soon as she came in, I saw her to be much excited.

"You know then about the daughter without having told me? He called again yesterday," she explained as she met my stare at her unconnected plunge, "and now I know that he *has* wanted to speak to me. He at last brought it out."

I continued to stare. "Brought what?"

"Why, everything." She looked surprised at my face. "Didn't he tell you about Maud-Evelyn?"

I perfectly recollected, but I momentarily wondered. "He spoke of there being a daughter, but only to say that there's something the matter with her. What is it?"

The girl echoed my words. "What 'is' it?—you dear, strange thing! The matter with her is simply that she's dead."

"Dead?" I was naturally mystified. "When, then, did she die?"

"Why, years and years ago—fifteen, I believe. As a little girl. Didn't you understand it so?"

"How *should* I?—when he spoke of her as 'with' them and said that they lived for her!"

"Well," my young friend explained, "that's just what he meant—they live for her memory. She *is* with them in the sense that they think of nothing else."

I found matter for surprise in this correction, but also, at first, matter for relief. At the same time it left, as I turned it over, a fresh ambiguity. "If they think of nothing else, how can they think so much of Marmaduke?"

The difficulty struck her, though she gave me even then a dim impression of being already, as it were, rather on Marmaduke's side, or, at any rate—almost as against herself—in sympathy with the Dedricks. But her answer was prompt: "Why, that's just their reason—that they can talk to him so much about her."

"I see." Yet still I wondered. "But what's *his* interest——?"

"In being drawn into it?" Again Lavinia met her difficulty. "Well, that she was so interesting! It appears she was lovely."

I doubtless fairly gaped. "A little girl in a pinafore?"

"She was out of pinafores; she was, I believe, when she died, about fourteen. Unless it was sixteen! She was at all events wonderful for beauty."

"That's the rule. But what good does it do him if he has never seen her?"

She thought a moment, but this time she had no answer. "Well, you must ask him!"

I determined without delay to do so; but I had before me meanwhile other contradictions. "Hadn't I better ask him on the same occasion what he means by their 'communicating'?"

Oh, this was simple. "They go in for 'mediums,' don't you know, and raps, and sittings. They began a year or two ago."

"Ah, the idiots!" I remember, at this, narrow-mindedly exclaiming. "Do they want to drag *him* in——?"

"Not in the least; they don't desire it, and he has nothing to do with it."

"Then where does his fun come in?"

Lavinia turned away; again she seemed at a loss. At last she brought out: "Make him show you her little photograph."

But I remained unenlightened. "Is her little photograph his fun?"

Once more she colored for him. "Well, it represents a young loveliness!"

"That he goes about showing?"

She hesitated. "I think he has only shown it to *me*."

"Ah, you're just the last one!" I permitted myself to observe.

"Why so, if I'm also struck?"

There was something about her that began to escape me, and I must have looked at her hard. "It's very good of you to be struck!"

"I don't only mean by the beauty of the face," she went on; "I mean by the whole thing—by that also of the attitude of the parents, their extraordinary fidelity and the way that, as he says, they have made of her memory a real religion. That was what, above all, he came to tell me about."

I turned away from her now, and she soon afterwards left me; but I couldn't help its dropping from me before we parted that I had never supposed him to be *that* sort of fool.

v

If I were really the perfect cynic you probably think me, I should frankly say that the main interest of the rest of this matter lay for me in fixing the sort of fool I *did* suppose him. But I'm afraid, after all, that my anecdote amounts mainly to a presentation of my own folly. I shouldn't be so in possession of the whole spectacle had I not ended by accepting it, and I shouldn't have accepted it had it not, for my imagination, been saved somehow from grotesqueness. Let me say at once, however, that grotesqueness, and even indeed something worse, did at first appear to me strongly to season it. After that talk with

Lavinia I immediately addressed to our friend a request that he would come to see me; when I took the liberty of challenging him outright on everything she had told me. There was one point in particular that I desired to clear up and that seemed to me much more important even than the color of Maud-Evelyn's hair or the length of her pinafores: the question, I of course mean, of my young man's good faith. Was he altogether silly or was he only altogether mercenary? I felt my choice restricted for the moment to these alternatives.

After he had said to me "It's as ridiculous as you please, but they've simply adopted me," I had it out with him, on the spot, on the issue of common honesty, the question of what he was conscious, so that his self-respect should be saved, of being able to give such benefactors in return for such bounty. I'm obliged to say that to a person so inclined at the start to quarrel with him his amiability could yet prove persuasive. His contention was that the equivalent he represented was something for his friends alone to measure. He didn't for a moment pretend to sound deeper than the fancy they had taken to him. He had not, from the first, made up to them in any way: it was all their own doing, their own insistence, their own eccentricity, no doubt, and even, if I liked, their own insanity. Wasn't it enough that he was ready to declare to me, looking me straight in the eye, that he was "really and truly" fond of them and that they didn't bore him a mite? I had evidently—didn't I see?—an ideal for him that he wasn't at all, if I didn't mind, the fellow to live up to. It was he himself who put it so, and it drew from me the pronouncement that there *was* something irresistible in the refinement of his impudence. "I don't go near Mrs. Jex," he said—Mrs. Jex was their favorite medium: "I do find *her* ugly and vulgar and tiresome, and I hate that part of the business. Besides," he added in words that I afterwards remembered, "I don't require it: I do beautifully without it. But my friends themselves," he pursued, "though they're of a type you've never come within miles of, are not ugly, are not vulgar, are not in any degree whatever any sort of a 'dose.' They're, on the contrary, in their own unconventional way, the very best

company. They're endlessly amusing. They're delightfully queer and quaint and kind—they're like people in some old story or of some old time. It's at any rate our own affair—mine and theirs—and I beg you to believe that I should make short work of a remonstrance on the subject from anyone but you."

I remember saying to him three months later: "You've never yet told me what they really want of you"; but I'm afraid this was a form of criticism that occurred to me precisely because I had already begun to guess. By that time indeed I had had great initiations, and poor Lavinia had had them as well—hers in fact throughout went further than mine—and we shared them together, and I had settled down to a tolerably exact sense of what I was to see. It was what Lavinia added to it that really made the picture. The portrait of the little dead girl had evoked something attractive, though one had not lived so long in the world without hearing of plenty of little dead girls; and the day came when I felt as if I had actually sat with Marmaduke in each of the rooms converted by her parents—with the aid not only of the few small, cherished relics, but that of the fondest figments and fictions, ingenious imaginary mementoes and tokens, the unexposed make-believes of the sorrow that broods and the passion that clings—into a temple of grief and worship. The child, incontestably beautiful, had evidently been passionately loved, and in the absence from their lives—I suppose originally a mere accident—of such other elements, either new pleasures or new pains, as abound for most people, their feeling had drawn to itself their whole consciousness: it had become mildly maniacal. The idea was fixed, and it kept others out. The world, for the most part, allows no leisure for such a ritual, but the world had consistently neglected this plain, shy couple, who were sensitive to the wrong things and whose sincerity and fidelity, as well as their tameness and twaddle, were of a rigid, antique pattern.

I must not represent that either of these objects of interest, or my care for their concerns, took up all my leisure; for I had many claims to meet and many complications to handle, a

hundred preoccupations and much deeper anxieties. My young woman, on her side, had other contacts and contingencies—other troubles too, poor girl; and there were stretches of time in which I neither saw Marmaduke nor heard a word of the Dedricks. Once, only once, abroad, in Germany at a railway station, I met him in their company. They were colorless, commonplace, elderly Britons, of the kind you identify by the livery of their footman or the labels of their luggage, and the mere sight of them justified me to my conscience in having avoided, from the first, the stiff problem of conversation with them. Marmaduke saw me on the spot and came over to me. There was no doubt whatever of *his* vivid bloom. He had grown fat—or almost, but not with grossness—and might perfectly have passed for the handsome, happy, full-blown son of doting parents who couldn't let him out of view and to whom he was a model of respect and solicitude. They followed him with placid, pleased eyes when he joined me, but asking nothing at all for themselves and quite fitting into his own manner of saying nothing about them. It had its charm, I confess, the way he could be natural and easy, and yet intensely conscious too, on such a basis. What he was conscious of was that there were things I by this time knew; just as, while we stood there and good-humoredly sounded each other's faces—for, having accepted everything at last, I was only a little curious—I knew that he measured my insight. When he returned again to his doting parents I had to admit that, doting as they were, I felt him not to have been spoiled. It was incongruous in such a career, but he was rather more of a man. There came back to me with a shade of regret after I had got on this occasion into my train, which was not theirs, a memory of some words that, a couple of years before, I had uttered to poor Lavinia. She had said to me, speaking in reference to what was then our frequent topic and on some fresh evidence that I have forgotten: "He feels now, you know, about Maud-Evelyn quite as the old people themselves do."

"Well," I had replied, "it's only a pity he's paid for it!"

"Paid?" She had looked very blank.

"By all the luxuries and conveniences," I had explained, "that he comes in for through living with them. For that's what he practically does."

At present I saw how wrong I had been. He was paid, but paid differently, and the mastered wonder of that was really what had been between us in the waiting room of the station. Step by step, after this, I followed.

VI

I can see Lavinia, for instance, in her ugly new mourning immediately after her mother's death. There had been long anxieties connected with this event, and she was already faded, already almost old. But Marmaduke, on her bereavement, had been to her, and she came straightway to me.

"Do you know what he thinks now?" she soon began. "He thinks he knew her."

"Knew the child?" It came to me as if I had half expected it.

"He speaks of her now as if she hadn't been a child." My visitor gave me the strangest fixed smile. "It appears that she wasn't so young—it appears she had grown up."

I stared. "How can it 'appear'?" They *know* at least! There were the facts."

"Yes," said Lavinia, "but they seem to have come to take a different view of them. He talked to me a long time, and all about *her*. He told me things."

"What kind of things? Not trumpery stuff, I hope, about 'communicating'—about his seeing or hearing her?"

"Oh, no, he doesn't go in for that; he leaves it to the old couple, who, I believe, cling to their mediums, keep up their sittings and their rappings and find in it all a comfort, an amusement, that he doesn't grudge them and that he regards as harmless. I mean anecdotes—memories of his own. I mean things she said to him and that they did together—places they went to. His mind is full of them."

I turned it over. "Do you think he's decidedly mad?"

She shook her head with her bleached patience. "Oh, no, it's too beautiful!"

"Then are *you* taking it up? I mean the preposterous theory —"

"It *is* a theory," she broke in, "but it isn't necessarily preposterous. Any theory has to suppose something," she sagely pursued, "and it depends at any rate on what it's a theory *of*. It's wonderful to see this one work."

"Wonderful always to see the growth of a legend!" I laughed. "This is a rare chance to watch one in formation. They're all three in good faith building it up. Isn't that what you made out from him?"

Her tired face fairly lighted. "Yes—you understand it; and you put it better than I. It's the gradual effect of brooding over the past; the past, that way, grows and grows. They make it and make it. They've persuaded each other—the parents—of so many things that they've at last also persuaded *him*. It has been contagious."

"It's you who put it well," I returned. "It's the oddest thing I ever heard of, but it is, in its way, a reality. Only we mustn't speak of it to others."

She quite accepted that precaution. "No—to nobody. *He* doesn't. He keeps it only for me."

"Conferring on you thus," I again laughed, "such a precious privilege!"

She was silent a moment, looking away from me. "Well, he has kept his vow."

"You mean of not marrying? Are you very sure?" I asked. "Didn't he perhaps——?" But I faltered at the boldness of my joke.

The next moment I saw I needn't. "He *was* in love with her," Lavinia brought out.

I broke now into a peal which, however provoked, struck even my own ear at the moment as rude almost to profanity. "He literally tells you outright that he's making believe!"

She met me effectively enough. "I don't think he *knows* he is. He's just completely in the current."

"The current of the old people's twaddle?"

Again my companion hesitated; but she knew what she thought. "Well, whatever we call it, I like it. It isn't so common, as the world goes, for anyone—let alone for two or three—to feel and to care for the dead as much as that. It's self-deception, no doubt, but it comes from something that—well," she faltered again, "is beautiful when one does hear of it. They make her out older, so as to imagine they had her longer; and they make out that certain things really happened to her, so that she shall have had more life. They've invented a whole experience for her, and Marmaduke has become a part of it. There's one thing, above all, they want her to have had." My young friend's face, as she analyzed the mystery, fairly grew bright with her vision. It came to me with a faint dawn of awe that the attitude of the Dedricks *was* contagious. "And she did have it!" Lavinia declared.

I positively admired her, and if I could yet perfectly be rational without being ridiculous, it was really, more than anything else, to draw from her the whole image. "She had the bliss of knowing Marmaduke? Let us agree to it, then, since she's not here to contradict us. But what I don't get over is the scant material for *him*!" It may easily be conceived how little, for the moment, I could get over it. It was the last time my impatience was to be too much for me, but I remember how it broke out. "A man who might have had *you*!"

For an instant I feared I had upset her—thought I saw in her face the tremor of a wild wail. But poor Lavinia was magnificent. "It wasn't that he might have had 'me'—that's nothing: it was, at the most, that I might have had *him*. Well, isn't that just what has happened? He's mine from the moment no one else has him. I give up the past, but don't you see what it does for the rest of life? I'm surer than ever that he won't marry."

"Of course, he won't—to quarrel, with those people!"

For a minute she answered nothing; then, "Well, for whatever reason!" she simply said. Now, however, I had gouged out of her a couple of still tears, and I pushed away the whole obscure comedy.

VII

I might push it away, but I couldn't really get rid of it; nor, on the whole, doubtless, did I want to, for to have in one's life, year after year, a particular question or two that one couldn't comfortably and imposingly make up one's mind about was just the sort of thing to keep one from turning stupid. There had been little need of my enjoining reserve upon Lavinia: she obeyed, in respect to impenetrable silence save with myself, an instinct, an interest of her own. We never therefore gave poor Marmaduke, as you call it, "away"; we were much too tender, let alone that she was also too proud; and, for himself, evidently, there was not, to the end, in London, another person in his confidence. No echo of the queer part he played ever came back to us; and I can't tell you how this fact, just by itself, brought home to me little by little a sense of the charm he was under. I met him "out" at long intervals—met him usually at dinner. He had grown like a person with a position and a history. Rosy and rich-looking, fat, moreover, distinctly fat at last, there was almost in him something of the bland—yet not too bland—young head of an hereditary business. If the Dedricks had been bankers he might have constituted the future of the house. There was none the less a long middle stretch during which, though we were all so much in London, he dropped out of my talks with Lavinia. We were conscious, she and I, of his absence from them; but we clearly felt in each quarter that there are things after all unspeakable, and the fact, in any case, had nothing to do with her seeing or not seeing our friend. I was sure, as it happened, that she did see him. But there were moments that for myself still stand out.

One of these was a certain Sunday afternoon when it was so dismally wet that, taking for granted I should have no visitors, I had drawn up to the fire with a book—a successful novel of the day—that I promised myself comfortably to finish. Suddenly, in my absorption, I heard a firm rat-tat-tat; on which I remember giving a groan of inhospitality. But my visitor proved in due course Marmaduke, and Marmaduke proved—

in a manner even less, at the point we had reached, to have been counted on—still more attaching than my novel. I think it was only an accident that he became so; it would have been the turn of a hair either way. He hadn't come to speak—he had only come to talk, to show once more that we could continue good old friends without his speaking. But somehow there were the circumstances: the insidious fireside, the things in the room, with their reminders of his younger time; perhaps even too the open face of my book, looking at him from where I had laid it down for him and giving him a chance to feel that he could supersede Wilkie Collins. There was at all events a promise of intimacy, of opportunity for him in the cold lash of the windows by the storm. We should be alone; it was cosy; it was safe.

The action of these impressions was the more marked that what was touched by them, I afterwards saw, was not at all a desire for an effect—was just simply a spirit of happiness that needed to overflow. It had finally become too much for him. His past, rolling up year after year, had grown too interesting. But he was, all the same, directly stupefying. I forget what turn of our preliminary gossip brought it out, but it came, in explanation of something or other, as it had not yet come: "When a man has had for a few months what *I* had, you know!" The moral appeared to be that nothing in the way of human experience of the exquisite could again particularly matter. He saw, however, that I failed immediately to fit his reflection to a definite case, and he went on with the frankest smile: "You look as bewildered as if you suspected me of alluding to some sort of thing that isn't usually spoken of; but I assure you I mean nothing more reprehensible than our blessed engagement itself."

"Your blessed engagement?" I couldn't help the tone in which I took him up; but the way he disposed of that was something of which I feel to this hour the influence. It was only a look, but it put an end to my tone forever. It made me, on my side, after an instant, look at the fire—look hard and even turn a little red. During this moment I saw my alternatives and I chose; so that when I met his eyes again I was fairly ready. "You still feel," I asked with sympathy, "how much it did for you?"

I had no sooner spoken than I saw that that would be from that moment the right way. It instantly made all the difference. The main question would be whether I could keep it up. I remember that only a few minutes later, for instance, this question gave a flare. His reply had been abundant and imperturbable—had included some glance at the way death brings into relief even the faintest things that have preceded it; on which I felt myself suddenly as restless as if I had grown afraid of him. I got up to ring for tea; he went on talking—talking about Maud-Evelyn and what she had been for him; and when the servant had come up I prolonged, nervously, on purpose, the order I had wished to give. It made time, and I could speak to the footman sufficiently without thinking: what I thought of really was the risk of turning right round with a little outbreak. The temptation was strong; the same influences that had worked for my companion just worked, in their way, during that minute or two, for me. *Should* I, taking him unaware, flash at him a plain “I say, just settle it for me once for all. *Are* you the boldest and basest of fortune hunters, or have you only, more innocently and perhaps more pleasantly, suffered your brain slightly to soften?” But I missed the chance—which I didn’t in fact afterwards regret. My servant went out, and I faced again to my visitor, who continued to converse. I met his eyes once more, and their effect was repeated. If anything had happened to his brain this effect was perhaps the domination of the madman’s stare. Well, he was the easiest and gentlest of madmen. By the time the footman came back with tea I was in for it; I was in for everything. By “everything” I mean my whole subsequent treatment of the case. It *was*—the case was—really beautiful. So, like all the rest, the hour comes back to me: the sound of the wind and the rain; the look of the empty, ugly, cabless square and of the stormy spring light; the way that, uninterrupted and absorbed, we had tea together by my fire. So it was that he found me receptive and that I found myself able to look merely grave and kind when he said, for example: “Her father and mother, you know, really, that first day—the day they picked me up on the Splügen—recognized me as the proper one.”

"The proper one?"

"To make their son-in-law. They wanted her so," he went on, "to have had, don't you know, just everything."

"Well, if she did have it"—I tried to be cheerful—"isn't the whole thing then all right?"

"Oh, it's all right *now*," he replied—"now that we've got it all there before us. You see, they couldn't like me so much"—he wished me thoroughly to understand—"without wanting me to have been the man."

"I see—that was natural."

"Well," said Marmaduke, "it prevented the possibility of anyone else."

"Ah, that would never have done!" I laughed.

His own pleasure at it was impenetrable, splendid. "You see, they couldn't do much, the old people—and they can do still less now—with the future; so they had to do what they could with the past."

"And they seem to have done," I concurred, "remarkably much."

"Everything, simply. Everything," he repeated. Then he had an idea, though without insistence or importunity—I noticed it just flicker in his face. "If you *were* to come to Westbourne Terrace——"

"Oh, don't speak of that!" I broke in. "It wouldn't be decent now. I should have come, if at all, ten years ago."

But he saw, with his good humor, further than this. "I see what you mean. But there's much more in the place now than then."

"I daresay. People get new things. All the same——!" I was at bottom but resisting my curiosity.

Marmaduke didn't press me, but he wanted me to know. "There are our rooms—the whole set; and I don't believe you ever saw anything more charming, for *her* taste was extraordinary. I'm afraid too that I myself have had much to say to them." Then as he made out that I was again a little at sea, "I'm talking," he went on, "of the suite prepared for her marriage." He "talked" like a crown prince. "They were ready,

to the last touch—there was nothing more to be done. And they're just as they were—not an object moved, not an arrangement altered, not a person but ourselves coming in: they're only exquisitely kept. All our presents are there—I should have liked you to see them.”

It had become a torment by this time—I saw that I had made a mistake. But I carried it off. “Oh, I couldn't have borne it!”

“They're not sad,” he smiled—“they're too lovely to be sad. They're happy. And the things——!” He seemed, in the excitement of our talk, to have them before him.

“They're so very wonderful?”

“Oh, selected with a patience that makes them almost priceless. It's really a museum. There was nothing they thought too good for her.”

I had lost the museum, but I reflected that it could contain no object so rare as my visitor. “Well, you've helped them—you could do *that*.”

He quite eagerly assented. “I could do that, thank God—I could do that! I felt it from the first, and it's what I *have* done.” Then as if the connection were direct: “All *my* things are there.”

I thought a moment. “Your presents?”

“Those I made her. She loved each one, and I remember about each the particular thing she said. Though I do say it,” he continued, “none of the others, as a matter of fact, come near mine. I look at them every day, and I assure you I'm not ashamed.” Evidently, in short, he had spared nothing, and he talked on and on. He really quite swaggered.

VIII

In relation to times and intervals I can only recall that if this visit of his to me had been in the early spring it was one day in the late autumn—a day, which couldn't have been in the same year, with the difference of hazy, drowsy sunshine and brown and yellow leaves—that, taking a short cut across Kensington Gardens, I came, among the untrodden ways, upon a couple occupying chairs under a tree, who immediately rose at the sight

of me. I had been behind them at recognition, the fact that Marmaduke was in deep mourning having perhaps, so far as I had observed it, misled me. In my desire both not to look flustered at meeting them and to spare their own confusion I bade them again be seated and asked leave, as a third chair was at hand, to share a little their rest. Thus it befell that after a minute Lavinia and I had sat down, while our friend, who had looked at his watch, stood before us among the fallen foliage and remarked that he was sorry to have to leave us. Lavinia said nothing, but I expressed regret; I couldn't, however, as it struck me, without a false or a vulgar note speak as if I had interrupted a tender passage or separated a pair of lovers. But I could look him up and down, take in his deep mourning. He had not made, for going off, any other pretext than that his time was up and that he was due at home. "Home," with him now, had but one meaning: I knew him to be completely quartered in Westbourne Terrace. "I hope nothing has happened," I said—"that you've lost no one whom *I* know."

Marmaduke looked at my companion, and she looked at Marmaduke. "He has lost his wife," she then observed.

Oh, this time, I fear, I had a small quaver of brutality; but it was at him I directed it. "Your wife? I didn't know you had *had* a wife!"

"Well," he replied, positively gay in his black suit, his black gloves, his high hatband, "the more we live in the past, the more things we find in it. That's a literal fact. You would see the truth of it if your life had taken such a turn."

"*I* live in the past," Lavinia put in gently and as if to help us both.

"But with the result, my dear," I returned, "of not making, I hope, such extraordinary discoveries!" It seemed absurd to be afraid to be light.

"May none of her discoveries be more fatal than mine!" Marmaduke wasn't uproarious, but his treatment of the matter had the good taste of simplicity. "They've wanted it so for her," he continued to me wonderfully, "that we've at last seen our way to it—I mean to what Lavinia has mentioned." He

hesitated but three seconds—he brought it brightly out. “Maud-Evelyn had *all* her young happiness.”

I stared, but Lavinia was, in her peculiar manner, as brilliant. “The marriage *did* take place,” she quietly, stupendously explained to me.

Well, I was determined not to be left. “So you’re a widower,” I gravely asked, “and these are the signs?”

“Yes; I shall wear them always now.”

“But isn’t it late to have begun?”

My question had been stupid, I felt the next instant; but it didn’t matter—he was quite equal to the occasion. “Oh, I had to wait, you know, till all the facts about my marriage had given me the right.” And he looked at his watch again. “Excuse me—I *am* due. Good-by, good-by.” He shook hands with each of us, and as we sat there together watching him walk away I was struck with his admirable manner of looking the character. I felt indeed as our eyes followed him that we were at one on this, and I said nothing till he was out of sight. Then by the same impulse we turned to each other.

“I thought he was never to marry!” I exclaimed to my friend.

Her fine wasted face met me gravely. “He isn’t—ever. He’ll be still more faithful.”

“Faithful this time to whom?”

“Why, to Maud-Evelyn.” I said nothing—I only checked an ejaculation; but I put out a hand and took one of hers, and for a minute we kept silence. “Of course it’s only an idea,” she began again at last, “but it seems to me a beautiful one.” Then she continued resignedly and remarkably: “And now *they* can die.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Dedrick?” I pricked up my ears. “Are they dying?”

“Not quite, but the old lady, it appears, is failing, steadily weakening; less, as I understand it, from any definite ailment than because she just feels her work done and her little sum of passion, as Marmaduke calls it, spent. Fancy, with her convictions, all her reasons for wanting to die! And if she goes, he says, Mr. Dedrick won’t long linger. It will be quite ‘John Anderson my jo.’”

"Keeping her company down the hill, to lie beside her at the foot?"

"Yes, having settled all things."

I turned these things over as we walked away, and how they had settled them—for Maud-Evelyn's dignity and Marmaduke's high advantage; and before we parted that afternoon—we had taken a cab in the Bayswater Road and she had come home with me—I remember saying to her: "Well then, when they die won't he be free?"

She seemed scarce to understand. "Free?"

"To do what he likes."

She wondered. "But he does what he likes now."

"Well then, what *you* like!"

"Oh, you know what *I* like——!"

Ah, I closed her mouth! "You like to tell horrid fibs—yes, I know it!"

What she had then put before me, however, came in time to pass: I heard in the course of the next year of Mrs. Dedrick's extinction, and some months later, without, during the interval, having seen a sign of Marmaduke, wholly taken up with his bereaved patron, learned that her husband had touchingly followed her. I was out of England at the time; we had had to put into practice great economies and let our little place; so that, spending three winters successively in Italy, I devoted the periods between, at home, altogether to visits among people, mainly relatives, to whom these friends of mine were not known. Lavinia of course wrote to me—wrote, among many things, that Marmaduke was ill and had not seemed at all himself since the loss of his "family," and this in spite of the circumstance, which she had already promptly communicated, that they had left him, by will, "almost everything." I knew before I came back to remain that she now saw him often and, to the extent of the change that had overtaken his strength and his spirits, greatly ministered to him. As soon as we at last met I asked for news of him; to which she replied: "He's gradually going." Then on my surprise: "He has had his life."

"You mean that, as he said of Mrs. Dedrick, his sum of passion is spent?"

At this she turned away. "You've never understood."

I *had*, I conceived; and when I went subsequently to see him I was moreover sure. But I only said to Lavinia on this first occasion that I would immediately go; which was precisely what brought out the climax, as I feel it to be, of my story. "He's not now, you know," she turned round to admonish me, "in Westbourne Terrace. He has taken a little old house in Kensington."

"Then he hasn't kept the things?"

"He has kept everything." She looked at me still more as if I had never understood.

"You mean he has moved them?"

She was patient with me. "He has moved nothing. Everything is as it was, and kept with the same perfection."

I wondered. "But if he doesn't live there?"

"It's just what he does."

"Then how can he be in Kensington?"

She hesitated, but she had still more than her old grasp of it. "He's in Kensington—without living."

"You mean that at the other place——?"

"Yes, he spends most of his time. He's driven over there every day—he remains there for hours. He keeps it for that."

"I see—it's still the museum."

"It's still the temple!" Lavinia replied with positive austerity.

"Then why did he move?"

"Because, you see, there"—she faltered again—"I could come to him. And he wants me," she said with admirable simplicity.

Little by little I took it in. "After the death of the parents, even, you never went?"

"Never."

"So you haven't seen anything?"

"Anything of hers? Nothing."

I understood, oh perfectly; but I won't deny that I was disappointed: I had hoped for an account of his wonders and I im-

mediately felt that it wouldn't be for me to take a step that she had declined. When, a short time later, I saw them together in Kensington Square—there were certain hours of the day that she regularly spent with him—I observed that everything about him was new, handsome, and simple. They were, in their strange, final union—if union it could be called—very natural and very touching; but he was visibly stricken—he had his ailment in his eyes. She moved about him like a sister of charity—at all events like a sister. He was neither robust nor rosy now, nor was his attention visibly very present, and I privately and fancifully asked myself where it wandered and waited. But poor Marmaduke was a gentleman to the end—he wasted away with an excellent manner. He died twelve days ago; the will was opened; and last week, having meanwhile heard from her of its contents, I saw Lavinia. He leaves her everything that he himself had inherited. But she spoke of it all in a way that caused me to say in surprise: “You haven't yet been to the house?”

“Not yet. I've only seen the solicitors, who tell me there will be no complications.”

There was something in her tone that made me ask more. “Then you're not curious to see what's there?”

She looked at me with a troubled—almost a pleading—sense, which I understood; and presently she said: “Will you go with me?”

“Some day, with pleasure—but not the first time. You must go alone then. The ‘relics’ that you'll find there,” I added—for I had read her look—“you must think of now not as hers—”

“But as his?”

“Isn't that what his death—with his so close relation to them—has made them for you?”

Her face lighted—I saw it was a view she could thank me for putting into words. “I see—I see. They *are* his. I'll go.”

She went, and three days ago she came to me. They're really marvels, it appears, treasures extraordinary, and she has them all. Next week I go with her—I shall see them at last. Tell *you* about them you say? My dear man, everything.

NOTES

CRITICAL ESSAYS

Mr. Walt Whitman (3)

In both materials and technique, the works of Henry James and Walt Whitman (1819-1892) lie at opposite poles. James's review (*The Nation*, November 16, 1865) of Whitman's *Drum-Taps* (New York, 1865) is therefore enlightening not only as a representation of one angle of critical opinion on the poetry of Whitman at the time of its publication, but also as a revelation of the limitations of James and of his philosophy of art at the age of twenty-two. James was never a keen critic of poetry. The center of his attention was set in prose fiction, which seemed to him to be the form of literature offering the highest opportunities for use of materials and employment of techniques. Furthermore, among the arts, James took delight in painting and sculpture rather than in poetry and music. Whitman, on the contrary, held poetry in highest esteem, and the influence of music was of great significance in the development of his poetic art.

The qualities James admired in poetry are expressed in two of his early reviews in which he considered the poems of William Morris (*North American Review*, October, 1867, and the *Nation*, July 9, 1868; reprinted in *Views and Reviews by Henry James*). In Morris's poetry James discovered good taste, good sense, good form, proportion, unity, and a commendable "modesty of imagination."

These qualities must be interpreted against James's background. In his own work, he was endeavoring to discover adequate artistic methods and to refine his craftsmanship. Form and process meant a great deal to him; art was the result of the careful application of technique to materials, providing only that the materials offered opportunity to portray ideas of a certain magnitude. But the whole force of his mind was on refinement. He was not, as was Whitman, a romantic: he did not trust novelty, intensity, the extremes of experience, the volitional, the eccentric, or the personal; nor did he appreciate their value in weaving new patterns or breaking old forms worn too smooth by imitation. So he did not appreciate Whitman's manner or structure.

Furthermore, the materials Whitman used did not excite James. Born in a small town on Long Island, Whitman had moved to Brooklyn and Manhattan and then had traveled with singing heart westward to the Mississippi, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Great

Lakes; James, born on Manhattan, in America had stayed within the limits of New York Bay, the Hudson, and Boston, and his travels had led him always to England or the continent of Europe. Unlike Whitman, James had not been a carpenter, nor had he engaged in any manual work. He was not interested in the common, the average man; he did not enjoy conversing with laborers, tradesmen, or ferry-boat crews. He had found no occasion, as had Whitman, to contemplate liberty, democracy, freedom, or equality. The broad-ax, Manhattan, and Lake Ontario sang no song for him. For him, Europe held the charm of the ages, the culture of the world. So the reading of Whitman's verses was for James a "melancholy task," yielding only a "medley of extravagances and commonplaces," the lines serving no purpose beyond that of amassing "crudity upon crudity."

Long after its appearance in the *Nation*, the review was reprinted in *Views and Reviews by Henry James*, edited by LeRoy Phillips (Boston: The Ball Publishing Co., 1908). James mentioned in one of his autobiographical volumes, *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), that as a youth he had failed to read any of Whitman's poetry until some years after Whitman's first volume, *Leaves of Grass* (1855), had appeared.

Ivan Turgenev (9)

No author more deeply influenced Henry James than did Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883). Born of a landed family at Orel, Russia, Turgenev studied in the universities of Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Berlin. He then passed from civil service to poetry, from poetry to drama, and from drama to prose fiction. His works in the short story and novel rank among the best in literature.

Turgenev used Russian scenes and characters, but he spent much of his life away from his native country. James came to know him in Paris, where both were living in 1875. There was much in the nature and art of Turgenev that appealed instantly to the American, and many phrases used by James to characterize Turgenev may as aptly be applied to James. For example, James has noted that Turgenev was admired by those of "cultivated taste"—that he was a "careful writer," an "earnestly attentive observer" who loved the "old" and was possessed of a "minutely psychological attitude" and a "genius for infusing a rich suggestiveness into common forms." Such phrases also describe James. Moreover, Turgenev's characters were "all portraits," and James so highly admired the exquisite portraiture of the Russian that his own descriptive technique reflects the influence. Though James sought often for narrative-quality, he occasionally emphasized picture-quality, as in "A London Life." Finally, Turgenev's heroines, who are often complex personalities,

rising to dramatic stature through failure or self-abnegation, are frequently reflected in James's creations.

The essay on Turgenev reprinted in this collection is James's earliest critical estimate of the great Russian novelist. It first appeared in the *North American Review* for April, 1874, and has been republished in *French Poets and Novelists* (London: 1878). A subsequent essay on Turgenev, written shortly after the death of the great Russian, appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1884, and was reprinted in *Partial Portraits* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1888).

The dates of publication of the more important works of Turgenev mentioned by James in the essay herein reproduced are given below. The titles follow the phrasing used by James in the essay: *A Russian Hamlet* (1849), *A Superfluous Man* (1850), *The Memoirs of a Sportsman* (1852), *A Correspondence* (1854), *Rudin* (1855), *A Wayside Inn* (1855), *A Nest of Noblemen* (1858), *Hélène* (or *On the Eve*) (1859), *Fathers and Sons* (1861), *Smoke* (1866), *A Village Lear* (1870), *Spring-Torrents* (1871), *Toc . . . toc . . . toc . . .* (1871). For a study of Turgenev's works, see *Democratic Ideas in Turgenev's Works*, by Harry Hershkowitz (New York: 1932), whose datings of Turgenev's works I have followed.

Hawthorne (42)

When William Dean Howells arrived in Boston in 1866 to become assistant editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, James had been in Boston four years and was beginning to write short stories and reviews and to take delight in the qualities of realism in the works of Honoré de Balzac, George Sand, and George Eliot. In literary theory, the young James was a realist. Soon Howells, though a realist also, called his attention to values in the romances of Hawthorne (1804-1864), and shortly thereafter certain of James's short pieces, such as "The Story of a Masterpiece" (1868), indicated that James was reading Hawthorne's works to good advantage.

Of Hawthorne's earlier stories in fantasy and allegory, James later chose "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "Young Goodman Brown" as perhaps the two best. But pure romance and allegory were not wholly congenial to James, who felt that symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) definitely marred the romance, even though the book was "the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in the country" by "the most valuable example of the American genius." James was a craftsman, and these remarks from his *Hawthorne* (1879) testify to his appreciation of good work. The flawless conception and structure of *The Scarlet Letter* won his abiding admiration. As for *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), it seemed to him Hawthorne's nearest approach to a picture of American manners; and he

considered *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) to be Hawthorne's "lightest, brightest, and liveliest," though containing the most tragic scene.

The opportunity to do a critical biography of Hawthorne came to James when he was asked to contribute a study for the English Men of Letters Series, edited by John Morley. It was published in London by Macmillan and Co. (1879) and in New York by Harper & Brothers (1880) [1879]. In a letter to Howells under date of January 31, 1880, *The Letters of Henry James* (ed. Lubbock), I, 71-74, James referred to the study as a "tolerably deliberate and meditated performance" expressing convictions he would boldly defend. Howells had written a review of *Hawthorne*, in which he had taken James to task for calling Hawthorne provincial—"exquisitely and consistently provincial." Howells had spent some years in Europe, and it was his opinion that Americans, including Hawthorne, were no more provincial than other peoples, especially the English. Furthermore, Howells was convinced that a new civilization furnished as good material for a novelist as an old one. James rejected these two points of view; he had given up residence in America in 1875 because he had felt that Europe had more to offer a novelist than had America, and he was arranging his life on this conviction. In his letter to Howells he strongly attacked both of Howells's statements—so strongly, in fact, that he was apparently somewhat haunted by a fear that Howells might be right. But he did not bend; he remained in England doing "international" novels.

The Art of Fiction (75)

James was convinced that, though all the arts had their limitations, the novel offered the fewest restrictions. It differed in kind from other forms of expression, and it had its peculiar disadvantages; but it also offered supreme opportunities. All life belonged to it. Goodness in a novel depended on sincerity, on the degree of intensity in the representations of all impressions of life, on the power of illumination, and on the quality of the intelligence of the author. True, there were thousands of bad novels, but there were thousands of bad works in any art.

This point of view lies back of James's remarks on Walter Besant's essay on the art of fiction, the essay which offered James this opportunity to contribute his commentary under the same title. Walter Besant (1836-1901) was an English novelist in his own right, and in general James was pleased with Besant's defense of the novel as a literary form; his only fear was that Besant had been short-sighted, or had failed to express the full possibilities of his art. Especially in his elaboration of Besant's "conscious moral purpose" did James contribute an attitude of high value to both art and morality in art.

The Art of Fiction appeared originally in *Longman's Magazine* (September, 1884); it was reprinted in Boston by Cupples, Upham and Co. (1885), and later was included in *Partial Portraits* (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888).

The Life of George Eliot (98)

In the 1870's James placed George Eliot (Mary Ann or Marian Evans, 1819-1880) along with Ivan Turgenev as one of the two greatest living novelists. In his earliest review of George Eliot's work, published in 1866, James honored her sound morality and her powers of delineating character; and in succeeding years he became more impressed with her "fragrance of moral elevation," her "earnestness, her educated conscience," and her intellectuality.

George Eliot was the subject of eight essays or reviews by James between 1866 and 1885. She and George Sand (Amantine Lucile Aurore Dudevant, 1804-1876), the one English and the other French, were the two women novelists who exercised strong literary influence over James during his early literary development. The article on George Eliot here reprinted was published originally in the *Atlantic Monthly* (May, 1885), and was included in *Partial Portraits* (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888). It represents the mature reflections of James, and was occasioned by the publication of John Walter Cross's *George Eliot's Life as Related in Her Letters and Journals* (1885). George Henry Lewes (1817-1878), English author and editor who made contributions to the literature of science and philosophy, in 1854 became Eliot's husband in all but legal form (since he was precluded from marriage to her). In 1880, following Lewes's death, she married a friend of long standing, John Walter Cross, and died in the same year. For further account of James's indebtedness to George Eliot and George Sand, see the introduction to this volume.

Emerson (116)

Henry James, Jr., could well appreciate Emerson's philosophical occupations, for Emerson and the elder Henry James were friends and correspondents, and there were certain similarities in the mental processes of the two men. Both were philosophers by nature, free scholars in thought. Both found food in the works of Emanuel Swedenborg. Emerson not only withdrew from the mild Unitarianism of New England but assured his wife that he was "wholly guiltless" of subscribing to transcendentalism as a fixed doctrine; Henry James, Sr., than whom the son knew no man more religious, could not accept any doctrine completely, though he derived sustenance from many. As the son understood the father, so he also understood Emerson.

But Henry James, Jr., did see limitations in Emerson. There were chords in James which could be struck by things which struck no chords in Emerson. There was Emerson's failure to appreciate Hawthorne's works, though the essayist recognized sin and evil in the world. (See C. E. Jorgenson, "Emerson's Paradise under the Shadow of Swords," *Philological Quarterly*, July, 1932, pp. 274-92.) There was Emerson's coldness toward certain masterpieces of poetic literature, and also towards the novel as an art, which was James's chief delight. There was, too, Emerson's lack of response to works of art in the Louvre, which indicated to James another blind spot.

Yet James described Emerson as a man both of letters and of genius. He saw in Emerson's works "the essence of good instruction," and he recognized the fact that the greatness of the Concord sage lay in his ability to address the souls of men and show man his capabilities in "aspiration and independence." For James, Emerson had "the genius for seeing character as the real and supreme thing," which was a quality James found lacking in most of the French novelists and which he found central in his own thinking.

James's essay on Emerson (1803-1882) was occasioned by reviewing J. E. Cabot's *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1887); it was published in *Macmillan's Magazine* (December, 1887), and in *Partial Portraits* (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888).

Émile Zola (139)

The indomitable energy of Émile Zola (1840-1902) and his stout resolve to write a great series of novels bearing on French life during the Second Empire (1851-1870) captivated James's admiration. Zola began the series with *La Fortune des Rougon* (1871) and closed it with *Le Docteur Pascal* (1893), having done twenty novels under the general title of *Rougon-Macquart. Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*. Among them are *La Curée* (1874), *Le Ventre de Paris* (1874), *La Conquête de Plassans* (1875), *Son Excellence Eugène Rougon* (1876), *L'Assommoir* (1877), *Nana* (1880), *Au Bonheur des dames* (1883), *La Joie de vivre* (1884), *Germinal* (1885), *L'Œuvre* (1886), and *La Débâcle* (1892).

The program was magnificent, for the purpose was to present a full delineation of French life during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The materials embraced both the natural and the social sciences. The achievement was limited only by Zola's restricted range of intellectual and emotional powers, his area of experience (which he sought to widen as much as possible through the years of composition), and his ability to employ art in the field of the naturalistic novel.

In addition to this major group of novels, James was interested in Zola's two shorter series: *Les Trois villes*, including *Lourdes* (1894),

Rome (1896), and *Paris* (1898), and the *Quatre Évangiles*, of which only three, *Fécondité* (1899), *Travail* (1901), and *Vérité* (1902), were finished at the time of the author's death. The final novel treats of the Dreyfus case. When Alfred Dreyfus was held under charges of treason while in French military service, Zola so strongly supported the plea of innocence of the officer and so bitterly attacked military officials that he finally fled to England to escape charges of libel and resided in London for nearly a year during 1898-99. James had become acquainted with Zola many years previously, when both had lived in Paris.

In writing of the major forces in French life, Zola brought to the art of the novel a sound ability to make masses of characters swarm realistically around some central subject or theme arising from a social or economic situation. James marveled at this literary achievement, for it required an art he himself probably could not have handled. It was the antithesis of his own method; for the essence of James's method lay in limitation of situation and elaborate refinement of delicate moods rather than in inclusiveness and broad effects.

But while James marveled at some of the qualities of Zola, he at the same time disparaged other characteristics. To James's way of thinking, Zola was completely lacking in taste; also, James held that Zola was so broadly inclusive in his use of materials that he fell into presumptuous ways, writing on matters he did not understand. Thus James called Zola "superficial and violent," and asserted that he never rose above the "malodorous Common," for his values were always of the lowest. This absence of taste, however, James felt gave Zola one advantage. Lacking all taste, Zola could write novels supremely representative of the realistic or naturalistic treatment of the "Common." And such novels had their place, even as do paintings depicting scenes of horror or agony. In this field, James selected *L'Assommoir*, *Germinal*, and *La Débâcle* as the three best examples.

As early as 1880 James wrote of *Nana* in the *Parisian* for February 26, but he printed no further critical remarks on Zola and his works until 1903, when the present essay appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for August. James slightly revised the text, but in no way altered his critical opinions, when he prepared the essay for republication in *Notes on Novelists, with Some Other Notes* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914).

FICTION

The Madonna of the Future (169)

This story is one of the best representatives of James's work during his Continental years, when to him Italy was still life's fairest environment. It appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for March, 1873.

Following two years of residence in Cambridge, Saratoga, and Newport, during which time he was engaged in reviews and fiction, James sailed again for Europe in 1872. He had commissions from two American magazines to do travel sketches, and he was further determined to advance his art in the writing of fiction. He revisited England, Switzerland, and Italy; and for a part of the winter of 1872-73 he resided in Paris. His literary productions included descriptive sketches of European scenes as well as short stories. At the time he was particularly interested in the descriptive ability of Théophile Gautier, the immense powers of Honoré de Balzac to portray varied life, and the stylistic qualities of Prosper Mérimée. Amidst this background he wrote "The Madonna of the Future," using for its locale his beloved Italy, and for its materials his beloved secondary interest, the field of the graphic arts. The story is evidence of James's fine appreciation of art, delicacy in understanding of human nature, and neatness in development of situation.

After publication in the *Atlantic*, the story appeared in *A Passionate Pilgrim, and Other Tales* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1875), *The Madonna of the Future and Other Tales* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879), *Collection of Novels and Tales by Henry James*, 14 vols. (London: Macmillan and Company, 1883), *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*. The New York Edition, 26 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907-1917), and *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*. New and Complete Edition, 35 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921-1923). The latest editions contain James's revisions, comprising changes of words and phrases.

Madame de Mauves (209)

"Madame de Mauves" represents the earlier James at his best, and it is in many respects typical of the mature James. The story involves an assessment of moral values arising from an "international" situation in which American and French marital standards come into conflict. It becomes, then, the story of an unstable situation which moves slowly and evenly in a beautiful curve, without much action, to the conclusion. The angle of revelation is characteristic; the story progresses largely through the eyes of an American, Longmore, a minor third person who comes from the outside to touch but not to alter the course of the story, and who, concurrently with the reader, becomes more and more familiar with the problem. The situation is developed when the French husband and the American wife adhere to conflicting views of conduct. The husband's sister represents the French point of view as to the proper feminine adjustment, an attitude which the wife cannot adopt. Through Longmore, James is enabled objectively to mirror the fine qualities of the wife. As in many of James's best stories, the plot

assumes the curve of a recumbent figure eight: the husband, originally unfaithful to his wife on many occasions, later pines only for her favors when she irrevocably refuses them.

Under the title "Mme. de Mauves" the story appeared originally in the *Galaxy* for February-March, 1874. James had been in Europe since early in 1872, residing in Paris, Germany, and Italy. Travel sketches, reviews, and short fiction were engaging his attention. The story of the De Mauves was one of six short stories selected for reprinting in James's first book, *A Passionate Pilgrim, and Other Tales* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1875), and it was chosen as the best of the group by a critic in *Scribner's Monthly* for April, 1875. As a whole, the six stories show the influence of the well-known French authors of fiction of the time, not only in form and style but also in the aura of urbanity which James gave to his work.

"Madame de Mauves" has also appeared in *The Madonna of the Future and Other Tales* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879), *Collection of Novels and Tales by Henry James*, 14 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1883), *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*. The New York Edition, 26 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907-1917), and *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*. New and Complete Edition, 35 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921-1923). The latest editions contain James's revisions, comprising changes of words and phrases.

The Lesson of the Master (291)

Late in the summer of 1887 James returned to London after several months of residence in Italy. "The Lesson of the Master" began to appear as a serial in the *Universal Review* for July 16, 1888, and ran through August 15. Part of this summer James spent in Torquay, England, and the succeeding autumn he wandered through France and Italy.

"The Lesson of the Master" is one of James's best short stories, and may be classed with such later narrative studies in the creative forces of art as "The Middle Years," "The Next Time," and "The Figure in the Carpet." The theme of the story reflects his ruminations during this restless period, when he was extremely disconsolate. His last two novels had been poorly received, and, sick at heart, he confided to Howells early in 1888 that editors **did** not care even for his shorter pieces. At the same time, he **felt that** his stories were honest contributions to art and deserved a **better reception**.

In the meantime James pondered the fate of **those** who have the dexterity of the Master in his story. The Master commands not only the **genius** to do work of distinction but also the skill to turn out popular stories of a low order, and he chooses the **latter course**,

forfeiting greatness for royalties which sustain sumptuous living. Paul Overt, the opposing character in the story, elects the way of distinction; and though, even as James, Paul is somewhat envious of the Master, he takes consolation in achieving true art. Something of bitterness hovers over the story, though this cloud is largely dispelled by the theme that the absence of a desire for perfection in an artist is his death. And indeed this theme sustained James at this time.

"The Lesson of the Master" has been reprinted in *The Lesson of the Master, The Marriages, The Pupil, Brooksmith, The Solution, Sir Edmund Orme* (New York and London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), in *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*. The New York Edition, 26 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907-1917), in the *Uniform Edition of the Tales of Henry James*, 14 vols. (London: Martin Secker, 1915-1919), and in *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*. New and Complete Edition, 35 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921-1923).

The Middle Years (358)

More than a decade after he had written "The Middle Years," while doing the Preface for the sixteenth volume of the collective edition, *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*, James recalled the immense amount of labor he had expended in keeping this story within the least possible space consistent with developing all the values. The story appeared during a period of some despondency: James's stories were not selling well, and his efforts in the drama were not successful.

"The Middle Years" is one of James's best short stories. The narrative method is that of the omniscient author, and there is much literary autobiography likewise. James, like Dencombe, was a perfectionist, continually altering his texts; like Dencombe, by 1893 James realized that he had "taken his flight," commanded a wide range, and done some enduring though not popular work. Over a dozen novels, long and short, lay behind him, and at least an equal number of volumes of short stories; ahead of him were to be four volumes of short stories and a dozen novels and *nouvelles*, some of great length and some quite short.

"The Middle Years" first appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* for May, 1893; it was reprinted in *Terminations: The Death of the Lion, The Coxon Fund, The Middle Years, The Altar of the Dead* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1895; also London: William Heinemann, 1895), *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*. The New York Edition, 26 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907-1917), and *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*. New and Complete Edition, 35 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921-1923).

The Real Thing (380)

In 1893 four volumes of short stories by James were published, one of them being *The Real Thing and Other Tales* (New York and London: Macmillan and Co.). Since 1890, the year of *The Tragic Muse*, James had temporarily abandoned the writing of novels, and during this period he was giving himself completely over to short stories and the drama. He was now in the midst of his great effort to become a successful playwright. Though frustrated, he still entertained high hopes, and his crushing defeat would not come until 1895.

The "germ" of "The Real Thing" was suggested to James by George du Maurier (1834-1896), the famous English illustrator whose popularity as a novelist during his last years had just begun with *Peter Ibbelton* (1891) and whose *Trilby* (1894) was yet to appear. James adopted here the narrative angle of the first person singular, a device which adds intimacy and increases the illusion of reality.

In the poignant elaboration of the fallen fortunes of a well-born gentleman and his wife reduced to pleading for menial occupation, one is reminded of James's earlier study in the same theme, "Brooksmith" (1891). Unusable, they can only be discharged—"Ce sont des gens qu'il faut mettre à la porte." In this story James portrays objectively and characteristically the inner springs of emotion.

"The Real Thing" has been reprinted in *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*. The New York Edition, 26 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907-1917), and in *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*. New and Complete Edition, 35 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921-1923.)

The Next Time (408)

When "The Next Time" first appeared in the *Yellow Book* (July, 1895), James, having "utterly failed in the drama," was turning his whole energy to short novels and tales, in which forms he hoped to do "immortal" work.

Whether "immortal" or not, "The Next Time" is among James's best short stories. The narrative force is unswervingly directed to one character only, Ray Limbert. Mrs. Highmore, who counterbalances Ray, is created that James might exhibit Ray in a series of dramatic attempts and failures to overcome an unendurable situation. Logic rules the final scene. But more important yet is the closeness of weave in the texture of the thought. The ideas and emotions spring from James's own life, even as in "The Lesson of the Master," to which "The Next Time" is closely associated.

In "The Next Time" Ray Limbert, like Henry James, can write nothing but "charming masterpieces" of highest beauty, and is, as James felt himself to be, "an exquisite failure." Several times a failure in the effort to be popular as an author, Ray lacks the adapta-

bility of Henry St. George of "The Lesson of the Master," who has genius but is willing to let it atrophy since he wishes to live a life of luxury and does have the ability to write popular novels.

"The Next Time" has been reprinted in *Embarrassments* (New York and London: Macmillan and Co., 1896; and London: William Heinemann, 1896), *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*. The New York Edition, 26 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907-1917), and *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*. New and Complete Edition, 35 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921-1923).

Maud-Evelyn (450)

Having given up drama, James turned diligently to writing short stories, *nouvelles*, and long novels. *The Awkward Age* (1899) was followed by a collection of short stories, *The Soft Side* (1900), which includes "Maud-Evelyn," originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1900.

"Maud-Evelyn" is an excellent example of the many psychological stories—some involving the supernatural, some treating of frustration between the sexes, and some exhibiting characters extremely sensitive to the past—which came from James's pen from 1888 through the years to the unfinished, posthumously published book, *The Sense of the Past*. Situations involving frustrations between the sexes are developed in such stories as "The Patagonia," "The Wheel of Time," "The Visits," and "Glasses." Stories relying on the supernatural, using visions or ghosts often without definite attempt at rationalization, include "Sir Edmund Orme," "The Way It Came" (later called "The Friends of the Friends"), "The Turn of the Screw," "The Real Right Thing," and "The Jolly Corner." A deep sense of the past was always in James's mind from the time of his first book, *A Passionate Pilgrim* (1875), and among the stories illustrating this sense are "The Altar of the Dead," *The Spoils of Poynton*, "The Marriages," and "The Old Things."

In "Maud-Evelyn" all three characteristics are present. The frustration of Lavinia and the psychological perversion of Marmaduke, the supernaturalism of the séances, and the overwhelming contemplation of the dead until the past is given rebirth and continuity in the present, is worked out with true ingenuity. After including the story in *The Soft Side* (New York: The Macmillan Company and London: Macmillan and Co., 1900), James failed to make it a part of the selected edition of his works to which he began to give his attention in 1905—the New York Edition of 1907-1917. But it was republished in *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*. New and Complete Edition, 35 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921-1923), and thus not only was a lacuna filled but a good story made more available to readers.

